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HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY AND THE APOSTLES' CREED

HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY
AND THE
APOSTLES' CREED

BY

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TO

D. J. P.

IN FRIENDSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The present volume, though composed of two different sets of addresses, is still, I hope, a unity. For through both the divisions of it there should run the one thought—Christianity is a religion rooted in history, its supernatural character evidenced in the facts of its origins, its oldest creed testifying to this, its essential, nature. I am sure that we need to free ourselves from the idea that Christianity can be, primarily and fundamentally, natural religion or mysticism or philanthropy or anything else whatever except the grace of God, manifested and wrought out from Himself and into the fabric of the world through particular historical happenings. The endless misunderstandings as to what the words "Christian," "Christianity" involve, the endless attacks upon the Church because in this respect or that it does not conform to what the particular critic assumes to be the meaning of Christianity, would be less frequent if only a deeper knowledge of the New Testament could make it plain that the positive and unchangeable element in Christianity, the Christian thing, is God's action through Christ in history. Once that is grasped, other problems can be faced with a confidence that the inquirer has rock

beneath his feet; when that is not the case, one can expect nothing better than brilliant and experimental theorising, or the intuitions of minds naturally sensitive to spiritual things. These often represent great gifts of God, but they need something stronger and simpler than themselves on which they may rest, and whereby they may steady themselves. Steadiness in religious thinking is exceedingly important; it need not be dull; it might with advantage be commoner than it is.

The importance of a right decision on the question of the historical aspect of Christianity has been made still clearer to me by a discussion which has recently taken place in the *Yorkshire Post*. A contributor of certain articles to that paper on the subject of spiritualism (he was opposed to the spiritualistic hypothesis) made, in connection with the relationship of religion and Christianity to the beliefs and practices of spiritualism, the following remark, "The conclusion, then, that it ought not to make any difference in our lives if the whole of the New Testament record as history were thrown under permanent suspicion, is one that every sincere Christian ought to reach." On this he was challenged by the Bishop of Durham and other correspondents of the *Yorkshire Post*. In his reply he insisted that the words "as history," which the Bishop had omitted in his quotation were "the key to the passage," and that the implication had been "that there would still remain the far more important evidences to which we individually bear internal witness, and which would be totally unaffected by the suspicion thrown on historicity." He continued, "I am quite convinced that they would remain totally unaffected

and that nothing would be changed in our recognition of an Infinite God and His purpose towards mankind. If our conceptions of 'crime and duty, right and wrong,' were unaltered, because they rest on eternal truths, would not our lives bear the same relation as hitherto to those truths and the Author of them?" Now this is precisely the attitude—far from uncommon—which has never really closed with the essential Christian thing, but is always in danger of resolving Christianity into eternal moral truths and a relationship to God based upon a recognition of them. But for the New Testament, Christianity is not in the least an ethical theism rooted somewhere else than in history. It is, of course, impossible to demonstrate beyond the possibility of error that the New Testament records are history and not myth; but it is also impossible to demonstrate that our moral conceptions and our intuitive acknowledgments of God and eternal truth correspond to objective reality. Faith always enters in, and Christian Faith has its distinctive character in virtue of its being directed towards a history in which, in a way absolutely unique in kind, God's grace and truth were present in action, for our salvation.

The first part of the book was prepared for three Sunday addresses in St. Margaret's, Westminster, during June, 1918; the third I was prevented from delivering, but all appeared in the *Guardian;* whence by the courtesy of the Editor they are reprinted, substantially in their original form. The addresses on the Apostles' Creed were given in Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, during Lent, 1919; the development of thought is essentially the same, but identity does not extend further.

While making my own view clear—as I hope—with regard to those statements in the Creed which have formed the centre of so much recent writing and controversy, I have not devoted large space to that controversy. Rather have I tried to write about the Creed as I understand it. We who believe that Christ was born of a Virgin, and that His body was raised from that grave in which it had been laid, need not always have either apologetics or polemics in the forefront of our minds. Before that comes the attempt to do what justice we can to the truth which we find in Christ.

LEEDS.

23*rd March*, 1920.

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HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY
AND THE
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I.—THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY

I

THE HISTORICAL GROUNDWORK AND APPEAL

"The first necessity," says Mr. Quick, in his valuable book *Essays in Orthodoxy*, "is not to re-state the Creeds, but to explain them." It is one of those simple, thoroughgoing remarks (how easily we overlook them!) which carry us near the heart of a question. I would apply it at the outset of these chapters to Christianity as a religion. There is much thought and talk as to the pressing need for a re-interpretation or re-statement of Christianity. It must be freed from this element or that which fetters its appeal to the twentieth century; its past must be less our concern than its present and its future.

I hope I do not lack sympathy with this restless, inquiring spirit, and all that it bears witness to of deep

perplexity and deeper longing. There are few of us who do not know something of it at first-hand. And there are none of us who would not count as one of God's most thankworthy gifts (what have we that we have not received?), one of life's moments most prized in recollection, a true redemption of the time, to be able to say the illuminating word, breaking in upon the darkness of another's mind, the word charged with the power to create or to restore all joy and peace in believing. More lightly would press our own difficulties upon us, the trials of our faith, if we could help others out of theirs. There are some burdens which, could we but take them on our own shoulders, would ease the weight of those which we must carry for ourselves. But sympathy on the one side must be balanced by understanding on the other. I have no doubt that we professed Christian teachers are much to blame; but we are not wholly to blame. There is an impatience, a lack of intellectual self-control, characteristic of the age, and, of course, accentuated by the war, which is a powerful hindrance to any Christianity which does not readily fit in with pre-conceived notions of what Christianity ought to be. And so we have loose and hasty identifications. The essence of Christianity is supposed to be found in mysticism as a devotional frame of mind, or in philanthropy as a practical activity. But these are things which, while doubtless they have true connections with the Christian Gospel, are distinguishable from it, and can exist independently of it.

All of us who have any real attachments with Christianity want to know how it is related to those

many other things which take up so much of our thought and interest, and form the natural environment of our lives. But what is dangerous and, however attractive at first, finally and thoroughly unsatisfactory, in the tendency I have mentioned, is the description of Christianity in terms of something other than itself, as though thereby you could grasp what Christianity is. In emphatic contrast from that tendency we do need at times to go back and inward to root principles and historic moorings, to look at Christianity, not in terms of anything else whatsoever, but as it is in its own right. Even then our course will not be all plain sailing—but still less will it be a voyage with no hope of discovery. And of the very essence of Christianity is its historical character. How fundamentally this is so, how with this is bound up Christianity's self-consciousness as a doctrine and a way of life, it is the attempt of these chapters to make plain.

The Christian religion is rooted in history. As has been well said, "it took its rise, not in an abstract conception of what ought to be, but in the recognition of what had been."[1] It revealed itself from the beginning, not as a speculative theory, however brilliant, but as loyal response to fact. That is the bond which unites the whole of the New Testament. That is the centre round which the whole circle of doctrine and exhortation moves. Piety and truth, the martyr's death and the missionary's labours, have their common origin not in thoughts, desires, aspirations, but in things done, and in Him Whose doings they were. It was the good news

[1] D. W. Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 5.

about Jesus which the first Christian preachers proclaimed. The Jewish Sanhedrin would have made small objection to Peter and John, though they were unlearned and unofficial persons, preaching about God; they might have spoken to the full about a kingdom and a Messiah to come; it was the name of Jesus which they would have them leave out. And what is the answer? "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." It was the same with Paul; probably he had never seen Jesus till that mid-day on the Damascus road, but both before and after, he knew what he had to fight, against or for, not a principle, but a person—Jesus Whom he persecuted, Jesus for Whom he was ready not only to be bound but to die. The Christ had come—that was the testimony of the whole body of the disciples; and He had come, not like the Messiah of the Book of Enoch, descending from heaven upon history with all the destructive powers of God unloosed, to bring it to an end, but entering into history and playing His part therein. What Paul testified at Corinth was that the Christ was Jesus (not the less accurate and far less pointed "that Jesus was Christ" of the English versions). And what the Christian community meant when it spoke of Jesus we have only to read the Gospels to see. Read St. Mark, and you can recover the swift movement of St. Peter's sermons. Those searching sayings and those mighty works, the story of the Passion and of the eclipse of faith, of the Resurrection and a lively hope reborn, were preached by Apostles and Evangelists in city after city of the Græco-Roman world, as things that had their place in history. M. Loisy may say that the historian

never encounters God in history. Yet simple men stirred history from its depths to settle into fresh channels by their conviction that of those things whereof they had been eye-witnesses there could be only one meaning—that God had visited and redeemed His people, and that to them and to those others who learnt of them had been committed a word, a ministry of reconciliation—that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. That is commentary, not fact; but what created the commentary? The Gospels did not fall from heaven, nor did Paul write his Epistles while in an ecstasy.

If we are to take our standard and perspective from the New Testament, if we are prepared to make the not unreasonable presumption that what was at the centre for the men of the New Testament ought not to be on the circumference for us, we must appeal firmly and repeatedly to the facts. There is nothing at all really profound in a contempt for the historical where religion is concerned, and in a preference for the æsthetic and the metaphysical. History is far the most wonderful, the most awe-inspiring movement and process which we know, with its numberless achievements standing out above the general level of the process like mountain peaks lifting their heads above a high tableland. For history reveals to us, as nothing else can, something of the fulness of the meaning of human personality. A philosophical book may tell you nothing about human personality at all, at least, nothing about its heights and depths, its inexhaustible possibilities for good and evil, its guilt and tragedy, its heroisms and sacrifices, its blasting and regenerative power. But you get all that in

history. Thucydides and Gibbon and Carlyle bring you more to the centre of life, put you more in touch with reality (whether they can explain it or no) than do Aristotle and Spinoza and Berkeley. To the conscience within us answers the great drama of the conscience of the race in history. We see, and—in part—we understand. And if there be a God Whose nature is holiness and love, then not in the abstract processes of thought shall we best find Him, but on that mighty scale of history where holiness and love, heart and conscience, welded together in one far-stretching, unresting struggle against the principalities and powers of evil, point forward to a day of final judgment and victory. And of that victory the Christian believes an earnest has already been given—only it is far more than an earnest, it is the whole victory, certain and condensed, and drawing its strength from the inmost recesses of suffering and death—on Calvary and at the open grave.

The rather fashionable modern doctrine of the finite, limited, struggling God, with Whom we co-operate as comrades and fellow-soldiers in the fight against evil, seems to me to be entirely inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ. Nor, for my part, can I regard it as anything but a dismal and depressing creed when compared with the great note of victory achieved which rings through the New Testament. The idea of God and ourselves conjoined in a partnership of knight-errantry and good comradeship lacks that inspiration which has flowed into the hearts of Christian men and sustained them in labours and trials manifold, when, following the New Testament, they have worshipped the God Who is

Saviour and Victor, the God Who gave His Son to triumph over the forces of evil in His Cross, the God through Whom, in the greatness of His love, we are—not anxious spectators of, or sharers in, an undecided warfare, with Him to fight by our side or at our head, but—already more than conquerors. In the New Testament evil is not something which may yet win the day and throw down God's moral temple which is so slowly and laboriously a-building; nor is there any twilight of God which may yet fall across Him and across the universe. But evil is condemned irretrievably, for ever, and the Kingdom of God alone holds the reversion of eternity. God's faithfulness is given to us in the history of His Son, in Whom all history divides, as it finds its first climax in Him, in Him its new starting-point, given to our faith indeed, not to our sight. Neither in history nor in philosophy can we pass from faith to sight, but there is richer treasure for the faith which searches history than for the faith which would pin itself to a God revealed only within the soul, or as the conclusion of a train of abstract reasoning.

For this is a distinguishing thing in Christianity—this sharply marks it off from many an idealistic philosophy or spiritual cult, ancient and modern. The winged imagination of Plato, the moral elevation of Stoicism, the mystic appeal of the worship of the Egyptian Isis or the Persian Mithras, all drew their powers elsewhere than from the actual world of fact and history. That world was something to escape from and transcend rather than the casket holding the precious treasure of the self-revelation of God. Sharp was the

contrast between the historical and the spiritual; or if, as in the Stoical Pantheism, they were made one in the thought that the whole world is permeated with the Divine Spirit, the wise man in his solitary soul was greater than they. But the Christian, when he wished to feed his faith in the living God, when he was called upon to play his part worthily in life, turned his eyes upon history and upon *a* history, upon a life and a passion, and a life after a passion. Nothing more deeply offended the convictions of the early believers than any attempt to deny the full reality of the historical manifestation. No words are dearer to St. John than those which seem to carry one beyond the limits of history—Spirit, Truth, Life—yet the anti-Christ whom he passionately denounces is the spirit which confesseth not Jesus, and when he thinks of Jesus he is thinking of the revelation of the Son of God come in the flesh; while to Ignatius of Antioch, those who in the interests of a supposed spirituality would make of the Lord's Body a phantasmal appearance, are themselves but phantom men.

And to-day there is not a little mysticism and spiritual idealism, in some respects truly Christian, which yet lacks the great Christian note, and is shortened in its moral power by its undervaluing of history and its readiness to conceive of the facts concerning Jesus as but the paler illustrations of eternal spiritual processes. And there are those who reject and denounce the Christian dogmas while they erect instead a fabric of speculative dogmas, doubtless intended to explain history but as certainly not grounded in history. Such thinkers seem

never to have come to close quarters with the fact that the Christian religion is rooted in historical happenings. What is needed is a more simple and more thorough knowledge of the New Testament, and a readiness to let it tell its own story. There is in it all the profundity of thought which the philosopher can desire, but there is also all the simplicity and directness of a faith ever keeping close hold on fact, which can and does provide for the wayfaring man a highway along which he can walk with joy in his heart. To sit loose to the historical side of the Christian revelation is to make Christianity a religion far less able to influence, guide, and control that history in which continually the moral meaning of the world, its moral tragedy and moral glory, is unrolled before our eyes. The Christian record in history has its deep stains; but the Christian who remembers the historical Christ, the Church which seeks to be true to the greatness of the words and works whereby He wrought upon the history of His own age and stamped with the sign of His Cross the ages that were and are yet to be, can never think of the common universal life of men and women as other than a life waiting and claiming to be baptised and raised to the full grandeur of a Kingdom of God. It is in the Christ of history that we gain the vision of history's fulfilment—"The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

II

HISTORICAL FACTS AND CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

When we say that Christianity is a historical religion we ought to mean more than that it has its roots in historical happenings and not in the meditations of a company of select, religiously-gifted spirits; besides that, we imply that the whole content of Christianity, its thought and its piety and its activity, is a development determined by and regulated by that historical grounding. How that is true of one great affirmation to which Christian thought has given expression I wish to try to show.

But first the way must be cleared of two errors, not at all uncommon, different indeed in character, but both tending to the same result. One is what I may call a depreciation of, and therefore a desire to minimise, the whole thought-side of Christianity. The revolt from the abstractions of a certain type of philosophy, the exaltation in religion of intuition, experience and emotion, the influence of William James and Bergson, who have bidden reason take, if not the lowest place among the human faculties, at least one of considerable humility, not to say humiliation, have become and remain strong and remarkable features of the age. Its effect upon Christianity is necessarily prejudicial to Christianity's doctrinal

side. If the reason is a socond-rate instrument, its products are likely to be of second-class quality. It will be better to concentrate on other elements in the religion and to treat the doctrine as a somewhat regrettable by-product, which, however, can be safely interned for an unspecified duration. We have a right to be suspicious of an attitude which squares so well with the fact that, as the Dean of St. Paul's has pointed out, hard thinking is hard work, that for the appreciation of any kind of doctrine or intellectual formulation some thinking is necessary, and that a dispensation from the necessity of thinking, especially of thinking about other people's thoughts, is sure to meet with a very high degree of popularity. The genealogy of a point of view may be illuminating, and the company which it keeps instructive, if not edifying. The theoretical anti-intellectualism of to-day has certainly no pride of ancestry, and I doubt whether it has much hope of posterity. But, in addition, so far as Christianity is concerned, the desire to lighten the ship of the Church by throwing the wheat (though it is not regarded as wheat) of doctrine overboard cannot possibly be gratified unless one is prepared to go behind not only Articles of Religion and Church Councils, not only Saints and Apostles, but Christ Himself, and rewrite the whole religion. And when I say, as those of whom I am thinking might say, "Christ Himself," you see how we slip unconsciously into doctrine. "Christ" is not primarily a personal name but a majestic title. St. Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ—that is, the longed-for Messiah, the anointed of God—was the most tremendous intellectual assertion in the world's whole

history. Its result is seen in the earliest and simplest, but far from undogmatic, Christian creed, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus is Lord." Christianity as we know it in its earliest character was not simple piety, revivalistic religion, or moral practice, to the exclusion of the intellect. The verdict from the evidence may be disliked, but I do not see that it can be scientifically and successfully challenged.

The other error lies in the supposition that the doctrinal side of Christianity reveals a piece of highly metaphysical and speculative construction. The admission is made that Christianity, as we know it, had nothing in common with undogmatic religion; but it is urged that this aspect of Christianity, however ancient, is irrelevant, being bound up with Jewish theology and Greek philosophy, which no longer control our methods of thinking. The mistake at this point lies in the idea that the intellectual content of Christianity proceeded from an unprofitable cobweb-spinning within men's minds, from an interest in theory for its own sake. I do not deny that there has been great interest in the presentation of Christianity as a scheme or system of truth. What I do deny is that the dogmatic conclusions of St. Paul and St. John, of Athanasius and Augustine, and the four first General Councils to which the Church of England makes appeal, were the result of abstract theorising out of touch with fact and experience. It was the fact of Jesus, and his experience of that fact, which worked through the inspiration of the Father in Peter's soul and drew from him the great dogmatic confession, "Thou art the Christ." And as to the Creeds, it is a

great mistake to be frightened by words. Such a phrase as that in the Nicene Creed, "being of one substance with the Father," may intimidate by its appearance of metaphysical subtlety; but all that is meant in the Nicene Creed is what the late Professor Gwatkin summed up as the essence of Christian orthodoxy—that Christ is as Divine as the Father, and as human as ourselves. And that seems to me at once a more intelligible and a more fruitful doctrine than that not unpopular one of the divinity of man, which many people probably regard as not a dogma, but a truism.

Now the truth which stands over against these misunderstandings (and therefore, undervaluations) of the intellectual element in Christianity is not specially difficult to grasp. Certain facts entered the field of history; or better, a Person came. The facts connected with Him were, in the greatest sense, dynamic and creative. What they created was a new experience. And they did not merely create a new experience in the sense of an immediate response; they created the possibility of continually fresh experiences. There was an expansion of soul and a deepening and purifying of conscience which meant an increased sensitiveness towards God. Doctrine was the third stage: it was created by the experience as the experience was by the facts. Not so immediately created: the process of reflexion implies an interval between the doctrine and the experience greater than that between the experience and the facts. Yet it is most noteworthy that in the primitive fundamental confession, "Thou art the Christ," the experience and the doctrine are at one. The apostle's

great personality had been stired to its depth by Jesus; his heart had been set on fire; but there was light as well as heat, illumination as well as kindling. If he owed himself to Jesus—"Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life" is the Johannine account of his utterance—that carried with it the doctrinal conviction that Jesus was the promised One, the Christ, the Son. This close connection of doctrine with experience, and of both with fact was never lost, though at times it was obscured. And the result is that doctrine has its historic reference and its moral and religious, not simply intellectual, content.

That this is so may be seen by a brief consideration of that great Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the Incarnation, which is right at the centre of the whole Christian system. Now this doctrine, according to its classic Christian meaning, is nothing but an interpretation of a particular piece of history, however true it may be that a philosophy of all history is found therein. The Jews, the one nation of antiquity with a genius for religion, cherished among other things a great hope. Exactly what form that hope takes on in the various writings which make up the Old Testament it is for scientific students of that literature to say. In any case, it developed till it became an ellipse with two foci—the coming Kingdom and the coming Messiah. Then in the fulness of time came Jesus; His preaching is steeped in the thought of the Divine Kingdom; it is not, on the surface, equally steeped in the thought of the Messiah. On the contrary, He has very little to say about Messiah. But He has much to say about Himself and to claim for

Himself; nevertheless, what He claims to be is not clear. He arouses immense enthusiasm and fierce opposition, yet He remains a mystery. But He intends that the mystery shall be revealed. So when the impression of His words and work and whole personality has had time to make its way into the hearts and minds of His chosen followers, he puts the decisive question, "Whom say ye that I am?" and blesses the decisive answer. But, so far from accepting the title of Messiah as one which promises Him a speedy and manifest victory over His foes, He urges upon His disciples, who are frankly bewildered by His teaching, that exactly the reverse is the case. Messiah must be put to death. So far are they from understanding how this can possibly be, that when His death comes it leaves them prostrate. They are set on their feet only by what is for them a real certainty, a firmly based assurance—that of His Resurrection. For a period of some weeks they see Him—not continuously, but on occasions which lived in their memories—and then He leaves them in such a way that they know that it is not till history is complete and God's final word to the world is at hand, that world which by His Word He called into existence, that they will see the Christ again.

It was on this fact-basis that the doctrine of the Incarnation was built up; and given that fact-basis, given, above all, the thought which Jesus had about Himself, that He was the promised Messiah, the doctrine is seen as anything but a brilliant speculation, a guess in the dark. If the facts are not facts at all, if the facts are seriously amiss at the critical points, if Jesus was the victim of a delusion, then, of course (unless you can

do what I cannot do—run a high wall down the centre of your mind, with history on one side and faith on the other, near neighbours but having nothing to do with one another, and indeed, to all appearance, not on the friendliest terms—unless you can do that) you will cease to take any interest in the doctrine. But if that is not your conclusion, if the grip you have upon the original facts still holds and you see no cause to relax it, above all, if you know yourself deeply in the debt of the Jesus of the Gospels, a debt indeed deeper than you can hope ever to repay, then you are face to face with what has the value of, because it is, a unique work of God in history. And that work is prolonged in its consequences, among other consequences in its challenge to thought, in its demand that the mind should elucidate what the heart adores. So you have St. Paul drawing out the meaning of the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And once more it must be said that if Jesus has no claim to these titles, Paul's notions are of no importance; on the other hand, if the claim made before Caiaphas in sight of death is a true claim, it becomes an exceedingly difficult thing to rule out the theology of St. Paul as so much mythological speculation. For the appearance of Paul in the history of early Christianity is one of the most extraordinary things in the whole movement. No wonder he thought, and we think, that he was separated unto the Gospel of God from his mother's womb, and called by His grace. And it seems to me to be a real strain on one's credulity to be asked to believe, what in point of fact a certain type of not irreligious scholarship does ask one to believe,

that in the Person of Jesus there was a real and, in degree, unique revelation of God, that Paul was the one man above all others who made that revelation accessible to the Græco-Roman world, and through it to us, and yet that in such a magnificent passage as the one in the Epistle to the Philippians, concerning the self-emptying of Christ Who pre-existed in the form of God, he threw Christian thinking on to mythological and—one must add in that case—untrue and unprofitable lines. The later doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, such a famous formula, for instance, as that of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., from which I take the following brief selection of words, introduces, I venture to say, no single new thought over and above what St. Paul wrote to Philippi: "We . . . confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood . . . of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood . . . to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without division, never to be separated."

All this is not philosophical speculation out of touch with facts. And it is a really curious and interesting point to notice that modern idealistic philosophy does at times reproach Christianity for what amounts to its fidelity to facts, and its unwillingness to speculate independently of them. Thus Professor Pringle-Pattison, in his Gifford Lectures called *The Idea of God*, while paying high tribute to the Christian belief in the revelation of God in Christ, regrets that Christian theology has limited the idea of Divine Incarnation to

one historical Person. The idea of the Divine Incarnation within humanity at large seems to him (I take it) a greater and truer one. But that is an essentially speculative idea. It is not induced through the actual moral impress of history; the element of critical reflection and interpretation, what one may call the theoretical construction of reality, is very prominent. It is not, indeed, properly comparable to the Christian doctrine at all. To say that one historic Person is the personal Son of God present as man in this world is one thing; to say that the whole of humanity stands in a relation of sonship to God and is inspired by the Divine Spirit is another. There is nothing in the latter conception at all akin to the moral weight of the self-consciousness of the historic Christ; the chequered moral history of our race in each of its generations bears no such testimony to a Divine Sonship as did all the moral wonder of the Person of Jesus. There can be no such reverence for humanity as a whole as there is for Him. The thought of the Divine Spirit immanent in all mankind gives us hope for the future, and perhaps some support in times when the beast and the devil in man are all too apparent; but, after all, that is nothing in comparison with what Jesus has meant and done for those who have believed that in Him and Him alone there has been the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son of God. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." Are these words that we could in any real sense apply to our human race? Is salvation to be found in the realisation by the race of its own nature?

Is that the truth which can save us from our sins and through them all? Or is not that word of Mr. Gladstone in his old age still true?—"All I write, and all I think, and all I hope is based upon the Divinity of our Lord—the one central hope of our poor wayward race."

What is true of the doctrine of the Incarnation, that it has neither grounding nor meaning except in virtue of the original facts with their whole moral and religious content, and of the transforming effect which they had upon the inner lives and outward activities of those who stood closest to the facts, does not cease to be true when we pass to other great Christian doctrines—that of the Atonement and that of the Holy Trinity. It was the historical Christ Who created the necessity for a profounder notion of forgiveness and redemption, and a richer notion of God. But on these further points I cannot now dwell. Let me but say this in conclusion. The greatness of Christ is a challenge to our ideas, as it has been in all the generations which separate us from Him. But not only to our ideas. The obedience of our faith should go far beyond the recital and acknowledgment of a formulary, however true that formulary be. For the final challenge of the Christ of history and of the Creeds is to our lives and to the society in which we live. And if we confess Him Lord and God we must rise up from the benediction of His outstretched Hands, prepared, as the Apostles were, to let His spirit guide us, and to walk in that way of obedience to His Will which alone is the way everlasting.

III

HISTORICAL FACTS AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is the way everlasting. It is that path which brightens more and more towards the perfect day, when the shadows and the shifting colours and the broken lights, amid which our journeying here must be, pass away into the radiance of eternity. But it is not simply the light of a great hope, the glory of the beams of the morning sun just showing above the horizon, which cheers the Christian traveller on his pilgrimage. The light is not promised as a prize without being given as grace. And that light which comes as grace to guide our feet, to keep them from slipping or to recover them when they have slipped, to strengthen them for the road which must be covered, is Christ. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee," runs the early Christian hymn, and for those who sang it God was revealed and His glory manifested in the face of Christ. And when trial and suffering were near, and strange it seemed that God's hand was not stretched out to deliver, the faint-hearted could be reminded that, for all that they did not see, yet they saw Jesus crowned because of the suffering of death with glory and honour, Jesus Who could help them from the depths of His own mighty experiences. Remembrance does not always mean strength or even comfort. There

is often more pathos than power in our recollections of the past. But the memory of Christ is our inheritance for strength and not for weakness. Through Him we believe on God; we draw near to God through Him—not as the Eternal Son or as the King, of Whose dominion there shall be no end, but as the Man, Christ Jesus. Our relationship to God is moulded and made alive through the influence of the Gospel story, through those facts of time with their timeless value. How they work upon the Christian life, how in what is most characteristic of that life their ever-living power is to be seen, is the subject to which I now wish to turn.

First, then, all that is greatest in Christian institutionalism and in Christian piety is to be explained as the prolongation in time and in influence of a historical Person. I refer to the Church and the Sacraments. The Church did not arise as, and essentially is not, a religious improvement society or a pietistic and mystical clique. The New Testament witness is perfectly clear against any such origination. The Church arose to testify to the fact that the Jesus of history was the Christ of God. It did not arise as a sphere of initiation for persons who wished to make trial of the powers of one out of many mythical Saviour-Gods. Nor, again, was the Church an end in itself, as though all that was contained in the idea of the Church was greater than what was contained in the idea of Jesus. The most exalted language is used of the Church in the Epistles of the New Testament—the Church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. But had there been any notion that the actual present existence of the Church, that sacred commonwealth of

which every particular community was a local illustration, rendered the past history of Jesus unimportant, had it been imagined that the Church, inspired and sped on her way by the Spirit of the exalted Christ, had no concern with the facts concerning Jesus, then the writing of the Gospels, certainly of the synoptic Gospels, would have been unnecessary labour. And of those Gospels, the two which, it is widely held, were first completed—St. Mark's Gospel and St. Luke's—were not written for Palestinian Jewish Christians at all—that is, they were written not for those whose national affinities might have occasioned a natural interest in the history of Jesus, but for Gentile converts, for whom an accurate recital of the facts, such as St. Luke took much trouble to give, would have been really unnecessary, had the Christian preaching and emphasis been devoted only to the Divine Saviour and the Holy Church.

The Church brought to the world the good news about Jesus. What He meant to her she proclaimed to, and wished to share with, the world. As a nation looks back to the great names of its history, as a school or college has its pious veneration for the memory of its founder, so the Church's life is full of the thought of what her Lord was and did. Her festivals and seasons mark the stages in His life, her devotions are directed towards the fuller understanding of that life and the pressing of its message home upon her members; her universal symbol recalls the supreme drama of His actual history. That great theologian, Dr. Hort, once expressed a fear of a tendency towards "Jesus-worship," meaning thereby an undue emphasis on, and adoration of, our

Lord's human nature, as though it, in itself, were a legitimate object of the adoration which is due to that alone which is truly and essentially Divine. But even if this danger were greater than I believe it to be, it would be well to bear in mind the significance of Dr. Rendel Harris's remark, that we do not sing "How sweet the name of Logos sounds in a believer's ear." The adorable revelation of the Son of God has been given us in a human historical life, and the Church lives on that, and on no distilled essence of super-historical, transcendental truth.

Nor does the case stand differently if we turn from the Church to the Church's greatest rites—the Sacraments. If we speak of them as Sacraments of the Gospel we have the key to their meaning. They are not symbols in the sense in which a great picture by Watts is a symbol—a pictorial illustration or embodiment of a great idea. Their content is not an idea, but a personal relationship. They express the abiding meaning of the historical Jesus to the Christian believer and the Christian community. It is not a question at this point of one type of Sacramental doctrine. But what would unchristianise the Sacraments at the outset is any idea that Baptism's essential meaning is initiation into an environment suited for the purification of the soul, and that the Lord's Supper is a material act representing the soul's nourishment by the apprehension of higher truth. Whatever place there may be for symbolism of this kind, it is not the first place. When the first Christians used the Sacraments, their thoughts were of the Lord Jesus, of His Death and Burial and Resurrection, of the

Sacrifice of Himself which He offered upon the Altar of the Cross, of the Sacrifice as become their feast. The longest section of that Creed, progenitor of what we call the Apostles' Creed, which was in use in various parts of the Christian world before the end of the second century, to be learnt by candidates for Baptism, was devoted, not to theological statement, but to events in the Lord's life. When in that century Justin, in his Apology for the Christians to the reigning Emperor, describes a Celebration of the Eucharist, he tells us that one of the features of the service was a reading from the memoirs of the Lord—in fact, from the Gospels. The Sacraments, like the Church, throw us back to a historical Person. Apart from Him they may be beautiful and edifying ceremonies, but apart from Him they bear witness to man's needs and aspirations, rather than to the favour of God bestowed and to his gifts (He gave His Son for us), which are without repentance.

Secondly, there is the Christian's personal religious life. He has and experiences all the needs common to all men for whom the moral life, the life of real goodness, is at once a problem and a duty. Convinced, as he may be, that "morality is the nature of things," he knows how hard it is to make his life tally with that conviction. Religious sensitiveness, the desire to respond to religious impressions, does not by itself lead to the conquest of sin and the attaining of positive moral greatness. The breach between devotion and righteousness can be very wide. Religion of a mainly metaphysical or mystic type is not adequate at this point. The mystery-religions of old time had indeed a sincere aspiration after goodness

and purity, but in practice they had their darker side. It was the moral elevation of the ordinary Christian life which gave to the Christian apologists one of their soundest and most effective arguments. The blood of the martyr was seed, not only because it flowed from heroic self-sacrifice at a moment of crisis, but because it was rich in the goodness of a lifetime, short or long. It is not possible to separate this magnificent manifestation of the uplifted heights of goodness to which human nature can attain from the revelation, given in the historical Christ, of that moral goal and prize which is of all things best worth winning. And it is of no slight moment that this revelation was not for a particular age alone. For it was not a revelation of duties in detail, but of man's power to rise to the level of all duties. Such a revelation must be given through history or not at all. Moral grandeur has no other outlet except through the stress and strain of the actual world. Of course, we do not think of Christ as having left us an ideal, or example, and then having retired from all active contribution towards man's pursuit of it. The present help which Christ brings is not dependent upon a recalling of the fact of His life and Passion. But, at the last, apart from history, we have no hold upon Him. Such a common expression as "the Christ-spirit" has a merely subjective, changing content unless it has its points of real contact with life, not imagined, but lived. The full meaning of life cannot be given in even the greatest of literature. The relationship between the facts and the persons who make or meet them is the author's contrivance. However near to real life

he writes, there must be a margin between his work and any reality in life that we have to face; and that limits the scope of his influence upon our temper and action as distinct from our imagination.

But Christ brings to us hope, encouragement, strength and peace by reason of all that He was and did. The Gospels lose their value if taken as inspired fiction. The imitation of Christ, which does not mean identity of our action with His, since there is not exact correspondence between what Christ did and what He would have us do, would hardly be an ideal at all, and certainly not the ideal which has had so much to do with the constant revivifying of Christian life, were Christ believed to be a symbolic and not a historical figure. The testimony of some of those who have had little affinity with orthodox Christianity is memorable in this connection. Mill, who looked on no life as better ordered than one which would meet with the approval of Jesus Christ—Lecky, who referred to the unparalleled influence of three short years in Palestine—have an understanding of one great element in the Christian appeal which is irreplaceable. And in an age when not only theological doctrines, but, as has been said, the natural sanctions and practices of morality are challenged, and goodness, like truth, may seem but a fancy or a preference, it is well to stay ourselves upon the rocklike greatness, the kindness, patience, sincerity, purity and love of the life of Jesus, to let the sophistication of doubt in goodness (of all snares to the soul the most subtle and the most perilous) vanish before the light which gives us not only things to see, but eyes to see with.

The words of Lecky to which I have referred bring us naturally to the third point on which I want to touch, the connection between Christianity as a religion rooted in history and public righteousness. That the influence of Christianity upon the development of our civilisation has been incalculably great hardly admits of dispute; the interconnection between religion and politics has not always been healthy, but it has been a persistent force. But what is not always understood is that Christ was, like the Hebrew Prophets, a public figure, acting directly upon the public life of His day. His words and work, and, above all, His Cross, were of no mere private interpretation directed towards the formation of individual character. His message was to the nation as a whole; when the nation as a whole showed itself unable to understand, His teaching became more limited; the Apostles were to Him the faithful remnant, just as the obedient Jews were to the Old Testament prophets. Yet even so His ministry retained its wider significance. His rejection by the nation meant the condemnation of the nation, more than of any individuals; in His Cross was placarded that national blindness which goes before the judgments of God. For history, the creative word means more than the idea, and the creative fact than either. And of all creative facts the greatest is the Jesus of history. His controversy with the Jewish state, in which was involved the whole question of His Messiahship, that is, of His lordship over history, meant nothing short of a historical cataclysm. The conflict between the Church and the Roman Empire was the reflex of His conflict with the Jewish state. And though the early

Church did not recognise it, it was a struggle, on her part, for supremacy rather than for toleration:—not the supremacy of a political power inherent in her (that has often been the mistake of Christians), but the supremacy of her Gospel of God's righteousness manifested and active in Christ throughout human life, on the grandest scale.

Ethics is a great and difficult and exacting subject: especially is that so when the comparative (though only comparative) simplicity of the problem of the adjustment of an individual life to the ethical ideal and imperative is merged in the far more intricate and challenging problem of the adjustment of a group, a nation, or a world. No wonder it is sometimes given up as insoluble. Idealisms, soul-cultures, mysticisms, however devout and aspiring, grow weak before it. But there is something adamant and inexorable about the Christ of the Gospels. While He repudiates the whole conception of an earthly, conquering Messiah, and bids men pay to Cæsar Cæsar's dues, there is no side, no corner of life which is out of the range of the undying reaction of His Gospel of the Kingdom. If He is ignored He is, whether consciously or not, defied. There is nothing in which we see the imprint of human intelligence, the fruit of human desire, the questionings and strivings of human consciences and wills, which is foreign to Christ. "The true spirituality," says Dr. Forsyth in that book of his, *This Life and the Next*, so opportune to these times, "is rooted in history." That is what Christ tells us, if we have ears to hear. The nurture of our souls is made and increased out of things done in time. A truly Christian spirituality owes

them too much to wish to be independent of them, for in them, as they enshrine the greatness of Christ our Lord, we are in touch not with time alone, but with eternity, with the holiness of the Father and of the Everlasting Son, Who enters into time to do His Father's Will. And in the days to come we shall return to the simplicity of the old Gospel story which our mothers taught us, and find in it a history more real and permanent than any history since, a history which is the power of God to salvation, and which exists for the redemption of the world.

II.—THE APOSTLES' CREED AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

I

RELIGION AND CREED: THE MAKING AND GROWTH OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

That "Christianity is not a Creed but a Life" is a widely-accepted religious epigram. And, like most epigrams, it has its use in containing and emphasising truth, if not the whole truth. There is apologetic value in whatever puts briefly and pointedly the fact that Christianity is a way (that most ancient title for it) of living, that the Gospel reacts upon the whole of human life and not upon any one department of it, and that the divine gifts which the Gospel enshrines are usable and of transforming power in that sphere of desires, purposes and actions which, far beyond what is true of reflective or speculative thoughts, includes the largest measure of our normal daily interests. We are far from having compassed the full meaning that resides within the thought of Christianity as a life. It is only by particular examples, themselves but partial and incomplete, derived from the light of the Gospel shining in the lives of individual saints and believers, that we can understand something of the marvel of Christianity triumphantly at

work in men and women viewed as so many individual explorers of the Christian way. And of Christian life on the greater scale of society, in its meaning for societies and nations, in its application to a world through a Church capable of acting upon the world and moving it, we have as yet but the most fragmentary conceptions. Indeed, we have hardly begun to think out the problem of the true relation of Church and world; we have not come to grips with those different strains of thought and testimony concerning the world which find a place within the New Testament. Our Christian ethic is individual rather than social; it is too little rooted in the conviction of a redemptive grace through which not the individual alone but human society with all its complexity of relationships, and, even beyond that, all things, things in heaven, and things in earth, the cosmic order and not the human one alone, share in and are made new by that reconciliation which is the fruit, as it was the object, of God's action in His Son. Not that this final thought of cosmic reconciliation has been left unworked, but it is easier to work æsthetically than ethically. And much as we need (it is a great and pressing need) a satisfying Christian aesthetic, we need a great and satisfying Christian ethic even more. And until we possess at least the first-fruits of it, and begin to see what it means for the ordering of society, we shall be moving on levels where, though the Christian calling may be heard and obeyed, the Christian life will appear as too much of the nature of a particular pietism for it to exercise a great and urgent effect upon the public interest and public conscience.

So let us insist that Christianity is a life, and let us try to understand, and to make others understand, more of what that means. But the epigram with which we started can never be more than a partial truth, and if the antithesis is pressed, the epigram becomes a quite absurd paradox. It may be worth while to consider this rather more fully.

In the first place, *abusus non tollit usum*. The reaction against intellectualism, whether in religion or in philosophy, is always in danger of going too far. Not only is the intellectual side of human nature a real side, but it is one to whose inquiries and demands it is impossible to set any limits except such as experience shows to be involved by the nature of that which becomes the object of inquiry. The desire for knowledge is not a mere appendage to the desire for life. Life uninterpreted, that is, life which does not attempt to regard itself objectively as a phenomenon existing within and dependent upon an environment that extends infinitely beyond it, is a life which is turning its back upon some of the most wonderful of its own potentialities. The intellectual progress of the race, the growth of intellectual interests within man, has its own history, but it is not a history which allows us to think of the intellectual side of human nature as simply the servant of the will to live or of the *élan vital*. Rather is the command "Know Thyself" which Socrates read upon the Temple at Delphi, parabolic of the divine instinct for knowledge which is one cardinal fact raising man above the level of the animals. And when man believes that his desire for knowledge has been crowned with a success which, though

it may leave much still hidden within the mists that enclose his life, yet gives him a sure clue to the meaning of himself and of the world, his faith becomes a creed, and the creed, while it interprets, is also part of his life.

Again, even allowing for some measure of contrast between creed and life, there must, if the creed is the objective expression of the individual's faith, be constant interaction. The life will develop out of and by means of the creed, the creed be illuminated by the life. For the creed in its essence is from life to life, from the life of God, in its mystery, yet mystery revealed, to the life of man, that man may make as full an answer as possible to God in action as well as in assent. For the harmonising of those lives the creed is an essential factor. And this is plain in the life of the Apostolic Church, as that is revealed to us in the Acts and the Epistles of Apostles. The outburst of new life in whose power we see that Church setting out on its task of evangelisation was not, and could not have been, divorced from a re-setting of the old faith of Israel. From the very first, the question of creed was, quite literally, a vital one to the Apostles and to the Church, of which they were the leaders.

Once more, the Christian life, though its social implications are still fragmentary and tentative, is the life of a society and not of a number of individuals. The Church is the greatest Christian fact in the world, and upon it depend, unconsciously, the faith and the ideals of individuals, who display no great robustness of Christian faith or practice, but yet retain and mean something by the Christian name. And, this being so, all the more does the society need all the grace and truth which it

can gain, and in that is included the secret of its own experience. For experience is fostered and strengthened when the hidden sources from which the experience has flowed into the society's life have been made visible, so far as that may be. Life lives not simply on experience, but on experience explored and understood, and the storehouse of grace with the Church holds in trust, and from which it gives to men to partake, is not a collection of magical formulas and sealed rites, but a treasure laid open to man's understanding and appealing to him through a sure word of revelation.

If a man is content that his religious life should be formless and vague he will naturally look for no creed which may lead to a discrimination between experiences and to a stabilising of some of his floating conceptions. But that such a life is the highest possible within the religious sphere, and that any attempt to balance the experimental by the static element is to fetter the religious conscience is a hypothesis at once unverifiable and improbable. I would go further and say that it is utterly impossible to construct any sort of respectable case for the proposition that the highest types of religious genius have tended to minimise the credal element. And within Christianity it has been those who have left their mark upon the Church's history who have looked to the Creed as a constant rallying-point, as a signpost giving a true direction to the religious life, a mirror of truth for the acquiring of purity and depth of thought, sincerity and holiness of character.

But the value of a creed does not necessarily involve the value of the same creed, abiding unchanged through

the ages. And it is quite certain that a very large number of creeds have been of quite transitory value and relevance; they have borne at this point or that the impress of some particular and local controversy; they have contained clauses of which we can only say that some special circumstance connected with the Church of which the creed was the symbol, occasioned their introduction. But to admit that is not to pass to the conclusion that a creed of a universal character is impossible or undesirable; on the contrary, in so far as the Christian life is a unity, and the same inspiration is at work to-day as was at work in the Church of the Apostles, so far is it reasonable to allow that some creed must be conceivable as covering the reality of that life, both then and now. It is arguable that there can be no continuity of thought capable of matching the continuity of life, but the only creed which can be of any real interest to Christians is one which makes the attempt. Creeds changing from age to age would be as objectively unsatisfying as creeds varying between city and city; a creed dependent on the temper of an age or place could not be regarded as enshrining that final word of God's revelation which is given, and not merely promised or foreshadowed, in the Christian Gospel. But a creed of a universalistic character would transcend the particular exigencies and outlook of a generation or a locality; it would be neither indefinite nor unintelligible; it would contain the truth condensed but not refined away, expressed positively rather than controversially, whatever background of controversy might have helped to its framing. Such a creed would not be mechanically rigid,

conveying the impression of ideas, at first fluid, stereotyped into a conventional form, but in it would be heard the utterance of a truth perpetually new, though ever the same. If ever we are in touch with divine truth (and, be it in a creed or not, every Christian would maintain that there is that contact), then we are in touch with something eternal and unchanging, like to God Himself, and the need before us becomes that of fuller apprehension; that this is the case with any creed we possess is, indeed, sharply challenged. What may we say in answer to the challenge without embarking on a long controversial statement? First, that if we are not to look for the expression of the permanent element of Christian truth in the two great Creeds called the Nicene and the Apostles' there is no quarter to which we can look. No other candidature for such a high position possesses any sort of equal claim or even relevance. Secondly, that in connection with the framing of both these Creeds there are facts connected both with their history and their substance which entitle them to an initial consideration and respect. They cannot rightly be approached as though they were in the first place interesting antiquarian documents. Anything like an abandonment of the Creeds, or a relegation to the position of illustrative documents, would be the most serious break with the historic Gospel of which our present Christianity could be capable, and would legitimately arouse the most pessimistic forebodings as to the possibility of any apprehension of Christianity as final truth.

We are concerned with one Creed, that called the Apostles', substantially the oldest and unquestionably

the most familiar of all. On two occasions, at Baptism and in the service for the Visitation of the Sick, the Church of England puts it in an interrogative form. It is obviously regarded as containing the essential Christian Faith.

Of its history we can speak with a good deal of precision. Evidence that becomes authoritative in the fourth century, but can be traced back in connection with various writers to a date some 200 years earlier, allows us to conclude that in its original form it was the baptismal creed of the Church of Rome, about the middle of the second century. It was closely connected with the administration of baptism, and was probably built upon the baptismal formula which meets us at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel, and is found in one of the earliest of extra-canonical writings—the *Didache*. Baptism was usually administered on Easter Eve; part of the preparation for the Sacraments was the learning on the part of the candidate of a form of words which he himself was to be capable of repeating before he should come to be baptised. Thus, the catechumen who was to be "initiated" through the solemn pronouncing over him, at the moment of baptism, of the Three Persons into Whose one name he was being baptised, received in the period of his preparation an intellectual enlightenment comparable in its own way to that moral and spiritual enlightenment which was regarded as resulting from the Sacrament. In connection with the actual administration of baptism the Creed was put to him in a shortened interrogative form, of which examples have come down to us.

The precise original form of the Creed, as also to the exact date of its first appearance, is not quite certain. But it did not widely differ from the following text:—

I believe in God the Father Almighty;
And in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord,
Born of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin,
Under Pontius Pilate crucified and buried,
On the third day He rose again from the dead,
He ascended into the heavens,
He sat at the right hand of the Father.
Whence He cometh to judge living and dead.
And in the Holy Spirit,
Holy Church,
Forgiveness of sins,
Resurrection of the flesh.

This Creed was in no way confined to the Roman Church; it can be traced from the end of the second century and onwards in other churches and countries. It was in use in Africa, in the south of France, in Spain, in Italian cites—Milan, Ravenna, and others. There was no absolutely constant text, but the framework was everywhere the same. The Creed was the baptismal Creed of Western Europe.

An impressive simplicity belongs to it, and in form it is positive and uncontroversial. At the same time, its appearance was of the utmost controversial importance. The second century was as full of curious beliefs, pretentious speculations, and mystic and theosophic cults, as is our own age. Both then and now there was the preaching of an esoteric Christianity, which

claimed to represent the inner truth of the Gospel. The faith of the Apostles was transmuted into a gorgeous and fantastic scheme, in which Christian, Greek and Oriental elements intermingled in varying proportions. Even now we are a good deal in the dark about Gnosticism, the generic name given to this remarkable religious movement, but we know enough to see where the critical differences from the Gospel as preached in the Christian churches, and forming the central unity of the New Testament, were visible. There was the sharp contrast between matter and spirit, as almost equivalent to the contrast between good and evil. There was the uncompromising denial that the God revealed in the Old Testament as this World's Creator could be identified with the Supreme Deity; the degree of the moral separation between the two was a matter on which there was no common opinion. There was the refusal to allow any real incarnation of the Spiritual Redeemer sent by the Supreme God to save not the world but some men from it; Jesus and Christ were to be distinguished as two, not one, connected by a merely temporary association which lasted but from the baptism of Jesus till the beginning of the crucifixion; or the humanity which the Redeemer seemed to have assumed was explained away as an appearance void of all reality. Consequently, the Redeemer's work could not be regarded as accomplished on the Cross; there was no atoning death of Christ, for Christ, the Spiritual Redeemer, did not die, and whatever death there was could not atone. There was much more to point the contrast, but in these vital matters the far-reaching character of the transformation which Gnosticism sought

to effect upon the faith of the Church is apparent. The Creed may have been deliberately framed to meet the danger by positive declarations meeting and rebutting the Gnostic theosophy from point to point. But whether this were so or not, it is obvious that any compendious statement of what the Church believed to be true about God and His providential and redemptive relations to the world could not but by implication deny the chief Gnostic doctrines.

Such, then, was the Creed at its first appearance. From among the many questions which concern the scientific study of it, and of its enlarged successor, our Creed of to-day, we may pick out two which may be of interest to others than technical scholars. Firstly, then, how came it that the Creed was enlarged? It was by a process of growth, traceable in various places and covering a considerable span of time. From the very first we see local modifications and additions. In North Africa the opening clause of the symbol was strengthened by words which asserted the creative work of God. Our words "Maker of heaven and earth" are the very last addition to find a permanent place in the Creed, but they are anticipated as early as the end of the second century. The African Church was, also, the first Church of which we can be sure that it closed the Creed, not with the confession of faith in the resurrection of the flesh, but with the far more adequate acknowledgment of eternal life. At Milan, where St. Augustine was baptised, they spoke of the Lord as having *suffered* under Pontius Pilate: this made the reality of the experience on the Cross clearer than when the word "crucified" was used

without the mention of suffering. It is possible that the predicate "Catholic" of the Church found its way first into the creed-form of the Church of Ravenna. At another Italian Church, that of Aquileia, in the fourth century and for an indefinite period before that age, the confession was made that our Lord "descended into hell." The cause of the addition is lost, and scholars vary in the reasons which they think most probable. And possibly, though Harnack doubts it, and with some justice, it was at Remesiana in Dacia, that is, the modern Bela-Pelanka on the railway between Nish and Pirot, that men first recited in the Creed the words "Communion of Saints."

Let us now pass from local additions (and not all local additions gained a lasting place in the final form) to the formulary when, as a whole, it has become more like our Creed. We must look to the south of France for the locality where so many additions are seen brought together in the Creed that the text resembles our text more closely than it does that of the old baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. The monastery of Lerins was a great centre of theological activity; the district was a stronghold of orthodoxy; it is at least probable that from it, though the name of the author remains a matter of speculation and, at best, of inference, proceeded, some time before the middle of the fifth century, the symbol which we call the Athanasian Creed. And here we find our Apostles' Creed almost entire. Cæsarius, who was Bishop of Arles from 503–543, used every clause which we use, excepting only the one which speaks of God as Creator of heaven and earth. By the

first half of the eighth century the process is complete. One, Pirminius, who was a missionary to South Germany, taught the Creed exactly as it is taught to-day, and the form is also found in a psaltery of, probably, Pope Gregory III., so that at Rome itself the old baptismal Creed had passed into what we may call its larger edition. How this change of so venerable a document came to be accepted at Rome is another of the unsettled problems connected with the history of the Creed.

So much for the history. Secondly, there is the question which naturally arises as to the title. We speak of the Apostles' Creed; and yet it is clear that neither in its present nor in its original form can the document be regarded as the handiwork of Apostles or of their age. The tradition which sees in the Creed the theological activity of the Twelve, does not belong to extreme antiquity, and it may have been originally simply the result of a philological error. When Rufinus, the Aquileian presbyter, who about the end of the fourth century wrote a commentary on the Creed, was, at the beginning of his work, explaining the meaning of the word *symbolum*, the commonest Latin title for the Creed, he drew out its relevance by a reference to two Greek words, each of which was, as he supposed, its proper equivalent. As to one of these words σύμβολον he was right. That word, like the Latin *symbolum*, bears the sense of a token or watchword. But when he thought that the Greek συμβολή was also a linguistic equivalent he fell into error. For the meaning of συμβολή is "joint contribution," and whether Rufinus started the idea or handed it on, it is obvious how συμβολή favours the

notion of a formulary to which several persons have contributed. And this is what Rufinus believes that the Apostles did, "each contributing his several sentence." Beyond this general statement Rufinus did not go, but the process was now started which led to the attempt—we find it first at Milan about this time—to assign particular articles of the Creed to particular Apostles. The attempt was made first on the basis of the old baptismal Creed of the Church of Rome; later, when our formulary had taken the place of its venerable ancestors, the articles of the more developed text were treated in the same way. The examples which have come down to us show that there was but little uniformity in the various ascriptions.

The Creed, then, was not compiled by Apostles. The most that can be said in the way of putting the Creed back, in a form earlier than that which obtained at Rome about the middle of the second century, to the Apostolic Age, has been expressed by the eminent German conservative scholar, Theodor Zahn. His work is available for the English reader in a translation entitled *The Articles of the Apostles' Creed*, but his argument, though ingenious and suggestive, does not arrive beyond the stage of possibility. Nevertheless, the fourth-century tradition, though insecurely based as to its substance and obviously legendary in its details, may still serve two useful purposes.

In the first place, it reminds us of the historic certainty that Christianity was never a life without a creed. We have seen that ideally it was impossible that it should be such; but we need not rely on probabilities however firmly based. The verdict of history is undeniable. The

demand for a creedless Christianity is a demand for something which never existed. Certainly no support for such a demand can be found in the New Testament. And it is a real need of our times that Christians, and any persons interested in Christianity, should turn to the New Testament to discover what Christianity was in that earliest epoch when the great foundation-stones of the evangelising and teaching activity of the Church were being laid. It is, at least, not unreasonable to hold that if religious truth is to be found pre-eminently within Christianity, the thought and labours of Apostles have something unique to teach us. It is theoretically conceivable that Apostles and apostolic men threw the Church on to gravely erroneous lines in the sphere of religious truth, and that those errors, unlike the expectation of a speedy Parousia, have endured to this day. But it is a view profoundly pessimistic in essence, and one that does not naturally encourage the expectation that we shall be able to recover the religious truth which was the inherently vital thing in the Gospel before Apostles overlaid it with religious material, in the sphere both of faith and practice, of a secondary order of value. It is remarkable that the confidence of some modern writers that their version of Christianity or of some Christian doctrine represents the essential and profound truth of the matter often goes along with such a neglect of the New Testament that they seem totally unaware of the fact that their affirmations and denials are almost diametrically opposed to what the New Testament both says and means. Extremely little satisfaction can be gained from the New Testament by those who wish to disparage the

intellectual commitments of the Gospel. That Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus is the Lord, and that in a special sense God is the Father of Jesus, are positive elements in the New Testament expression of that Gospel. Κύριος Ἰησοῦς—Jesus is Lord—is, before the year 60, firmly established as the watchword of the Apostolic Church. We make a far more disastrous mistake if we imagine that the Apostles and their churches were little concerned with theology or Christology than if we were to believe that the Apostles composed the Creed which goes by their name.

In the second place, the old tradition embodies the truth that our Christian faith as set forth in the Creed does not go beyond the New Testament. It is not a matter of inference or deduction, but of plain correspondence. Later formularies of every kind, however much their compilers may have intended that they should be in accord with the New Testament and have been prepared to vindicate their harmony, stand to it in no such direct relationship and unmediated derivation. But the Apostles' Creed springs from the New Testament as from its own unchallengeable parent. It is impossible to attack the Creed without attacking the New Testament at the same time.

There is, indeed, nothing except the New Testament itself, which binds us as closely to the Apostles as does this venerable Creed. It is no barren document, dusty with the passage of years, which links our faith with the faith of the Lord's chosen witnesses. Through it courses the living confidence in the grace of God which stirred to new energies their minds as truly as

their hearts and wills, and as we read or speak its familiar words that same grace is presented to us for our strengthening and consolation. Even if the Gospel were not, as we Christians believe it to be, God's truth in action for our salvation, even if its claims were historically unfounded, its teachings baseless, its promises and hopes destined to fade away into the blankness and hopelessness of an unredeemable world, we should still do well to honour the greatness of a faith which could express itself with such simple grandeur as is enshrined in the Creed.

II

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Up till quite recent times persons who have, with whatever doubts and reservations, professed the Christian Faith, and, besides them, persons who have been prepared to affirm their belief in God, have been inclined to take the truth of these words for granted. Whatever else they might believe, they believed this. The reduction of religious belief to its most elementary terms, the reaction against what was regarded as the burden of dogma, left the first sentence of the Creed unchallenged. Here was a rallying-point to which men could turn with the confidence that their faith could not lie open to the charges of credulity or superstition.

But this attitude takes no account of the fact that the words of the Creed represent no immediate delivery of the human consciousness, but a hard-won triumph against other beliefs. The belief in "gods many" had an imposing history in respect both of the length of time, and of the varied races and countries among which it prevailed. And the alternative to polytheism was not the faith expressed in the Creed. When the Greek philosophers, in their search for a principle of unity, reached, as some of them did, the conviction that there was only one Being who could truly be described as God,

they by no means went on by some inevitable process to think of Him as Father, or as Almighty, or as Creator. Some of them, such as Socrates and Plato, were not far removed from such thoughts, but they attained to no clear vision of their truth. The almightiness of God was limited by the nature of matter, regarded as not His creation, but as co-eternal with Him; and the making of the world out of pre-existent matter was not a task which Plato was prepared to assign directly, and without intermediaries, to the supreme God Himself. Other Greek thinkers, both before and after Socrates and Plato, were still further removed from the Christian belief. The Stoics, while they used language compatible with the belief in one God, and really advanced the doctrine of the divine fatherhood, were, in fact, pantheists who thought of creation as an eternally-recurring process dominated by the iron law of an unavoidable necessity. And if we turn from Greece to Israel, we see that the old Hebraic idea of God's Fatherhood was limited in its application; God was the Father of the nation rather than of the individual. How difficult it was for some who claimed the Christian name, and to whose teaching there were profoundly Christian sides, to accept the belief in one God, Himself the Creator, may be exemplified from the instance of Marcion, who, about the middle of the second century, either broke away or was expelled from the Church of Rome. He taught quite definitely that there were two Gods, one of whom, the inferior, was the Creator, the other, the supreme God, being the Father of Christ.

If the belief of the Creed be considered philosophically

rather than historically, the story which the history gives becomes very intelligible. For at every point of the belief there are great difficulties, arousing questions to which no man can provide an answer completely satisfying in logic. Any doctrine of the world involves insoluble problems ; all that can be done from the standpoint of reason is to take the doctrine as a whole, compare it with its rivals, try to understand the nature and source of the difficulties—whether they are inevitable in view of the limitations imposed upon our minds by the present conditions of our existence—and then decide whether the doctrine, as a whole, and allowing their proper weight to the attendant difficulties, does or does not make sense of the universe, that is, express an intelligible relationship between the mind of the thinker and the sum-total of phenomena and experiences which is the subject-matter on which he goes to work.

Every doctrine of the universe passes far beyond the possibility of demonstration. Reason has its powers and rights, but reason cannot arrive at certainties. Faith is not opposed to it, for faith is, from one point of view, reason's supplement, and in all faith there is implicit that perfection of reason which could achieve what reason, as it exists for and in us, never can achieve. And behind every act of reason and every venture of faith stands that radical faith in the intelligibility of the universe, apart from which all thinking would be but the grandest instance of illusion and self-deception.

Faith in God the Father Almighty, is, then, whether regarded historically or ideally, something far more majestic than the spontaneous utterance of the natural

human consciousness. Indeed, when one reflects upon its meaning, one might imagine that it would be in place almost anywhere else than at the beginning of a baptismal creed. And yet as dogma it is fundamental, for everything depends upon the ultimate character of the system, if there be any, which runs through the universe.

At the outset of our inquiry into the meaning of the words, that we may see in what sense we can hold them to be true, we must take note of the influence which the special circumstances of the time, and current fashions of thought, may have in stimulating a reaction from what is supposed to be involved in this article of the Creed. So gigantic a fact as the war has been responsible for intellectual as well as physical and national convulsions, and men are too ready to assume that the intellectual effect is necessarily to the good, resulting in a sharp antagonism to cant and make-belief. That is not the case. Such an event as the war, by throwing certain values into high relief, and drawing thought into certain deep, but possibly narrow, channels, does not operate in a way favourable to that balance of judgment whose absence cannot be compensated for by brilliant and suggestive improvisations of ideas. Great emotional pressure is not the safest guide to sound thinking. Above all, it is much easier to make assumptions as to what is implied by a doctrine to which the now vehement assailant has previously devoted little or no attention, and then proceed to attack the supposed conclusions, than to try to understand what it actually does and does not mean. Mr. Wells, in his antagonism to this first article of the Creed, has almost repeated the mistake of

the mid-Victorians who reached at a single bound the conclusion that the doctrine of evolution was destructive of the notion of creation. It was assumed that the idea of creation carried with it certain beliefs with which the evolutionary theory was, quite obviously and truly, incompatible. Similarly, it is assumed that the belief in God Almighty, were it true, would necessarily involve consequences which, in point of fact, do not happen. And these assumptions outrun sober thought and balanced judgment; people read into the Creed ideas which are the over-luxuriant crop of their own imagination, and which they rightly see to be quite absurd. And so "dogma" is condemned long before it has even begun to be understood. But understanding rests on true interpretation, and that is our first duty.

"I believe in God . . . Maker of heaven and earth." That is, I believe in a personal source of existence, and I refer all things that ever have come into existence to Him as their sole origin. The word "personal" has not been slipped in illegitimately; the Creed does not leave a door open for a pantheistic doctrine which would merge God in the world, allowing Him, at best, to be what the Stoics thought—the world's Soul. That doctrine is excluded partly by the word "Father," wholly and decisively by the word "Maker." The eighteenth-century conception of God as the great Mechanic or Engineer was prosaic, and remote from the utterances of the devotional spirit. Yet it is not a useless conception, for it brings out in the clearest way the thought of God's difference from and superiority to the works of His creation. The Creed is equally positive: the ultimate

supremacy, the uncaused cause, is to be looked for not in matter nor in any conception akin either to chance or to necessity, but in One to Whom we apply such terms as we can intelligibly use only in relation to a Person.

The thought that there must be some form of existence which had no beginning is one which we know to be true, while at the same time it is absolutely inconceivable. The conception of eternity is not one which we can compass with our minds. All that we can say is that the alternative of original blank nothingness out of which something arose to start the whole process of the universe is one which is not only inconceivable but cannot be true, An old Greek philosopher who spoke of the "non-existent" seems to have meant by it empty space: empty space is as good a symbol of nothingness as we can want, and it is impossible to believe that the universe, in the most primitive form which astronomical science attributes to it, sprang from empty space. We are forced back on the conviction of what the Greeks called "a beginning that had no beginning."

This, according to the Creed, is God, a Being possessing mind and will. And, on the apologetic side, it may fairly be said that, granted the initial impossibility of conceiving of uncaused eternal existence, an impossibility which is common to every theory of origins, there is less difficulty attaching to the assumption that that which has no beginning, and is itself the beginning of all other things, has the character of mind and will than that it has the character of, for instance, centres of electrical energy. The most real cause of which we have any experience is

something which is immaterial in a way that electrons are not immaterial—the human mind and will. If we look for the final cause of the house in which we live or the church in which we worship, we shall find it not in the mason's tools, nor in the architect's plan, nor in the order in writing on which the builder acted, but in the idea of the house or church which existed in some mind, and in the determination which followed that the idea should be carried out.

But such an ultimate personal cause might be far removed in feelings and interest from the world of created things, even though there could have been no creation apart from Him. Any such possibility is, so far as the Creed is concerned, removed by the introduction of the word "Father." The idea of God is clothed with a fuller meaning, warmth and intelligibility are added to it, when we go forward to the thought of God as Father. The relationship of God to creation remains, and is shown to be, a relationship of superior to inferior, of cause to effect; but it is also shown to be one of providence and affection. The Fatherhood of God in this sense was not revealed by the Gospel; it was not a new doctrine preached by Christ. What we may truly say is that in this connection there is a progressive revelation, a deepening of the idea in the New Testament as compared with the Old. What is not true, though the suggestion is far from unknown, is that the predominant conception in the Old Testament is of God as an Oriental sultan or despot. The notion is to be found in Sir William Watson's poem *The Unknown God*, and the notion will not bear serious examination.

Certain passages in the Old Testament, if isolated and regarded as expressing the doctrine of the whole, might allow of such an interpretation, but the two thoughts about God which go deepest in the Old Testament and are the explanation of its total character are those of the righteousness of God and His fatherly love of Israel.

The word "Father," when taken in its grave context at the opening of the Creed, excludes two false attitudes which men can assume towards whatever power or powers they recognise as divine and as concerned with their affairs and actions. The first is to think of such powers as capricious and unreliable, easily provoked and demanding continual acts of homage which reduce the worshipper to the status of a grovelling suppliant. The other, and it is far commoner to-day (though each alike reveals the weakness of the natural man) is to treat God as an easy-going and indulgent being, whom there is at least no cause to fear. So God's Fatherhood is either lost or caricatured, and the link which should unite divine and human fatherhood is broken. For the Creed gives us the opportunity of rising to the height of that great prayer of St. Paul, in which the divine fatherhood is viewed as the basal reality which constitutes the truth of all earthly fatherhood. But those heights will never be reached unless we have a true vision of the noblest meaning which can attach to fatherhood, whether it be God's or man's.

There is one thing more to be said about this word in the Creed. If we could take the first article by itself we should have no reason to introduce any other idea than that of God as the Father of Creation and of men who

form part of that creation. But there may be good cause for not isolating this article; the words "His only Son" in the second article refer back to the word "Father" in the first, and must be allowed for if that is to receive its full meaning. To us, "God the Father" has become a technical theological expression parallel with "God the Son" and "God the Holy Ghost"; if we stop and ask what relationship is implied in the expression "God the Father," we must answer—the relationship of Father to Him Who is the Son. We must not read back our technical procedure of thought into the Creed as though the Christians of the second century thought in exactly the same way as we do; nevertheless, the unique Sonship of Christ was far too dear and prevailing a thought for them to be able to leave it out of account when they spoke of the Fatherhood of God. The full revelation of the wealth of divine Fatherhood was manifested only when it was remembered that God was the Father of an only Son, the Beloved, and that He had given Him for the world's salvation.

With the next word we are plunged into one of the most living issues of modern religious controversy. It is not a new issue, nor even a specifically Christian one, but to it the thought of our age is attracted, as former ages have been to the problem of the Person of Christ, or to the conditions of salvation, or to the nature of the Church. The Creed describes God as Almighty, and many find that description the greatest of stumbling-blocks. Not an almighty God, but a finite, struggling, suffering God is demanded with a passion which at least leaves no doubt of the importance which is attached

to the challenge. What the Creed says is treated as though no falser or more harmful idea had emerged from the minds of theologians to the confusion of true religion.

We may begin by seeing what inevitable restrictions must be put upon the word. Whatever else the word means it does not mean that God can do anything. There are impossibilities for God as well as for man, and some impossibilities for God which are far from being so for man. "He cannot deny Himself"; the great moral ideals of truth and justice and holiness are absolute laws of His nature; they are not to be regarded as external to Him, as expressing a standard outside of Him with which nevertheless He completely conforms. He *is* the moral ideal and law; though Plato may waver, the Christian does not waver in identifying that highest of all the ideas, the idea of the good, with God. There is, then, an absolute impossibility for God—that He should be less than the supreme good. And, without irreverence, we may say that there are others, that it is not possible for God to make the same thing, at the same time and under the same conditions, at once to be and not to be, which is really only an example of our conviction of the rationality of the universe, which is itself an expression of the nature of God. Again, it is not possible for God to bestow upon man freedom and responsibility and, at the same time, to force man to exercise his will in one way only, to will nothing but the good. The consequences of the exercise of a bad will are, morally, of no account whatever as compared with the bad will itself, except in so far as the working of the bad will

infects other wills and turns them to badness. This last experience results from the fact of the solidarity of mankind. A world of persons in which evil, with its effects, was so completely individualised that the consequences of the exercise of a bad will fell solely upon the subject of that will, is inconceivable; further, it is quite undemonstrable that it would be a morally better world than ours. We are at least helped to realise what evil is by the tragic effects of evil wills falling upon others besides the immediately guilty, while some of the highest moral qualities are evoked by the fact that the struggle against evil is far more than a series of individual battles. The ramifications, the perversions, the pitilessness of evil, as we know it, have nothing to do with any flaw in the original construction of the world, or with any weakness in God. They merely bear witness to the fact that any declension from the good is capable of indefinite extension in the same direction.

The word "almighty" is not to be rightly understood if we cannot rise above the tendency, very natural and yet very misleading, to think of God, and of everything we believe concerning God, in relation to man and man's needs. A good deal of present-day religious thought is in danger of constructing or assuming a universe which has its centre in man rather than in God. And, in consequence, the ends of the divine action are regarded as dependent upon the fact of human existence, and as motived by a concern for man, which would be a legitimate outlook only if our knowledge of what existence means were altogether greater than it is.

When we speak of God as almighty we ought not, at first, to bring in the thought of what is or may be implied as to God's dealings with man and the conditions of human life. Rather should we fasten upon the positive assurance given in the word that it is impossible that by any power whatsoever the sceptre of rule should be wrested from the hands of God. It does not mean that God cannot be resisted, but that He cannot be successfully resisted. There is no fate, no necessity, which lies outside the action of the divine will and limits it. No twilight of God will ever submerge Him and His universe. Matter represents no second and, in some sense, independent power.

The doctrine of the suffering God is untrue, and therefore un-Christian, whenever the suffering is regarded as anything except the result of the free action of the divine will, and of those conditions which depend finally upon the way in which God has exercised His will in creation. However we think of God suffering, we must think of Him as suffering because He wills to suffer, even as He suffered in Christ. The feelings of God cannot be the result of the working of some external force or attraction which God is unable to resist. The divine sympathy is never detachable from the divine will. God freely gives us all things, as He freely gave us His Son. And it is of incomparably less moral and religious importance that I should believe that God is now suffering with my sorrows and pains than that I should believe that I mean so much to God that He gave His Son to die for me. And of the latter I can be sure, as I cannot be sure of the former. It is impossible for me to understand how God

suffers with me, and I know that, in any case, suffering must be an entirely inadequate description of that relation of God to myself which means God's will directed towards me; but in the death of Christ I can see God's will concentrated for me and my salvation, and to rest on that is to rest on the securest thing in existence. Even from the point of view of human needs, I believe that in the long run the need of security goes deeper than the need of sympathy. A sympathetic God, sharing with us the toil and the pain, is an attractive conception, but He must be something more than that, and different in kind, if He is to do for us all that we hope God may do, and we know man cannot. And when I confess God as almighty, I take to myself, if I am thinking of my own wants, the assurance that His mercies cannot fail, nor His arm be straitened, and I lean upon the God of Whose providence and victory there can be no doubt. And that assurance is, for the Christian, bound up with God's work in Christ. It is not as though God had never come near to the world's worst fires. As a reaction against the Aristotelian conception of a God wrapt up in Himself, the doctrine of the suffering God is not only intelligible, but stands for a deeper moral and religious interest. Unfortunately, those who champion that doctrine seem too often inclined to push it to an extreme where it inevitably conflicts with other truths. Thus, my friend Mr. Studdert-Kennedy commits himself to a dogma which I cannot regard as in accordance either with Christianity or with natural reason when he affirms that God's only throne is the Cross. To believe that God reigns in heaven, to make one's own the wonderful

imagery of the Apocalypse, is not to build an idol, or to form in one's mind the image of a despotic ruler, but to ascribe to God the final control of the universe. He does not fight a battle whose issue is undecided, and He does not live in a universe which might escape from Him.

There is one further point in connection with the almightiness of God on which a word must be said. Mr. A. C. Turner's striking article in *Concerning Prayer*, in the course of which he ruled out of the notion of power as applied to God all content except love has probably had a considerable influence. But while it is wrong to contrast the love and the power of God, and we must think of the divine power, and of every exercise of it, as absolutely compatible with the divine love, as with the divine holiness, it does not therefore follow that we ought to identify the notion of power with that of love. To do so is to run the risk of a simplification which may do harm to the completeness of our view of the moral nature of God, and so to the adequacy of our beliefs as to His dealings with the world. There is much in the New Testament which only by forced interpretations could be made to harmonise with the above-mentioned identification.

So the Creed naturally passes to the thought of God as Creator, though the words which close the first article were the last of all to gain a settled place in the western Creed. But Irenæus, about the year 200, knew that it was part of the faith which the Catholic Church had derived from the Apostles, and the Church of Carthage had the words "maker" or, more literally,

"founder of the world," in its rule of faith from the first, unless they are to be regarded as an addition of Tertullian's, aimed against the Gnostic denial that the Supreme God was also the maker of the material world. For us their meaning is clear enough. There is no source of existence other than God: we are not to try to avoid some of the difficulties which raise questions as to God's relationship to the world by entertaining any idea of some other principle of existence or some eternal form of existence independent of God. To do so would be to escape from certain difficulties only to fall into profounder ones: above all, the principle of unity which is bound up with monotheism, representing in itself one of the great triumphs of the human reason, would be sacrificed.

Nothing is said in the Creed as to the method of creation: the question of process and of time is quite immaterial to religious interests. No light is thrown upon the philosophical problem of what is involved in the idea of creation out of nothing. What the Christian may fairly answer to an objector who confronts him with the principle *ex nihilo nihil fit*—nothing arises out of nothing—is that in the divine mind and the divine will we have the assurance of eternal, substantial existence, and that, given the supreme reality, metaphysical difficulties as to the origination of what is obviously less real as compared with God can be safely left on one side. Far more important is it to see already presented in the words of the Creed the Christian conception of the relationship between spirit and matter. The moment we confess that the material world is of God, we have the key to the

true thought and handling of material things. We avoid contempt, and we acquire reverence. We shall have our eyes open to see in the heavens and the earth the signs of God's working. The form in which the old argument from design was presented is no longer open to us, but the general impression to be derived from the order and the beauty of the world still speaks for God. The more amazing the universe appears from the standpoint of scientific investigation and discovery, the more necessary does it become to find an adequate cause, to relate the process of evolution to a principle which stands behind it, and a law which works in it.

The Creed emphasises the transcendent relationship of God to the world. Transcendence is, indeed, of the *esse* of the relationship, if we are to escape pantheism and the return to a less ethical notion of God. For ethics mean nothing apart from persons, and unless God is as personal as we are, He is on a morally lower level. But belief in God's immanence in the world is not excluded by the Creed. The immanence of God, like the suffering of God, is a conception which is apt to be pressed to too great lengths by those who have found in it a fresh illumination. Both the transcendence and the immanence of God can be held in such a way as to impair the fulness of faith which we ought to have, and can have, as to God's relationship to His creation. The New Testament is a safeguard against one-sidedness, for while it gives no countenance to the identification of God with the world, it expresses, especially in connection with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the thought of the divine indwelling and presence.

Such, then, is the beginning of the Creed. To regard it as so much barren dogma is to be blind to the riches stored in its simple words. The world is, in the end, either a desert or a garden. It is a desert if there are no resources and helps, no control and government beyond what is to be found in the energies and operations of matter; no streams fertilise a world in which all beauty, goodness and love are finally nothing but the by-products which have emerged in the course of the material sequences. But the desert becomes a garden, watered from the wells of salvation, if, while we know little, we know enough to be sure that in the beginning was God and He created the heavens and the earth. So the world gains meaning, and we strength, and a Creed which secures both possesses a vitality which the passing of the centuries can do nothing to diminish.

III

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD

The six articles (or seven, if the Session at the Father's right hand is regarded as an article distinct from the Ascension) with regard to Christ remain essentially what they were from the beginning. The only new idea is that of the Descent into Hell, and it is not quite certain if this was originally more than an expansion of the thought already contained in the word "buried." The specific mention of the Conception, as distinct from the Birth, and of the Suffering and the Death add nothing new. They are additions which merely fill out the Creed, and give it greater explicitness.

In these articles the character of the Christian Gospel or Faith is made simply but decisively clear. The first article of the Creed is not exclusively Christian, though we may well ask whether it will not be left increasingly to Christians to affirm its doctrine of God. But, in any case, the first article is not the Christian Gospel; that Gospel is intimately related to it, but it is itself a really new thing. And this Gospel, as expressed in the Creed, is the Gospel of a Person, of a historical Person, of a transcendent Person.

It is, firstly, the Gospel of a Person. The way in which personality is appreciated provides a sharp line of division among types of thought and religion. The

decisive question is, Does personality represent something of final value or not? There are philosophies and religions which would answer in the negative In the system of so eminent a thinker as Spinoza, and in Buddhism, personality has no power of ultimate survival; it is not a permanent value; it is not at the heart of things; nor in such systems is it admitted that all things exist, if one takes the matter far and deep enough, simply in relation to personality.

Now there have been, and are, certain strains and tendencies within Christianity which, when emphasised to the neglect of other factors, are unfavourable to a supreme insistence upon personality, and tend, not only to impair the survival-value of human personality, but to depreciate the conception of personality in connection with God. But, if the Christian influence be taken as a whole, it undoubtedly throws its weight on the side of the importance of personality. Neither the New Testament nor the first article of the Creed is compatible with the thought of a depersonalised God, of a God Who in respect of self-consciousness and thought and will and love is less than man. That the divine personality transcends human personality, as we know it, is certain; thinkers such as Lotze and Illingworth have taught that perfection of personality exists in God alone, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity is at least a proof that the anthropomorphism which makes God in man's image is excluded in the Christian thought of God. But in the great cleavage which divides personal and impersonal views of God, Christianity takes its place as an upholder of personality.

The first article teaches a personal God, and both in philosophy and in the common sense, which may often be the equivalent for philosophy in the technically untrained mind, supports for this conception may be found. But a far deeper hold upon the meaning and worth of personality is secured by the fact that the Gospel is, as is said in the first verse of our earliest Gospel, the Gospel of, that is, concerning, Jesus Christ. The deeper goes Christian knowledge of Him, the intenser the devotion to Him within the believer's heart, the more impossible does it become to suppose that God, His Father, should be less than He, as less God would be, were we denied the right to think of God as being as personal as Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—the revelation which Christ brings is the revelation of a personal God. The Gospel is steeped in the reality of personal relationships between man and God; and those relationships find their assurance in no subtle processes of thought on the part of man, not even in teaching beyond man's natural reach and given to man, but in the Person of the Revealer.

Then, secondly, the Gospel is the Gospel of a historical Person: that is, we are not dependent upon traditions which from amidst a bewildering mass of uncertainty might yet enable us to believe that such a person did exist; something like that is true of Pythagoras and Zoroaster. But here is given to us a Person Who truly belongs to history; there is a historical context to His life; we know the historical conditions which affected it.

We know His Mother's name, and who was the Roman governor under whom He suffered.

Now, the articles which speak of Christ, though not polemical in form, yet had a great importance in the controversy which beset the Church about the time when the Creed was put together. That controversy was largely concerned with the extent to which Jesus Christ did truly belong to history. If the Gnostics were right: if, as some of them taught, there had been no real birth, no real body, no real crucifixion, then clearly the links binding the Gospel to concrete historical fact were broken. And with the breaking of those links the Gospel itself would have been dissolved into a mysticism or religious philosophy, parallel to much that existed in the world at that time, and stripped of precisely that moral power which was among the world's deepest needs. The moral, the historical, and the personal form a threefold cord of religious strength. Minimise or reduce the importance of the historical and the personal, and the moral is struck a blow from which it can never wholly recover. For the moral is manifested through persons on the field of history, and a religion which lacks moral fibre is unequal to the stern concreteness of life. Mysticism by itself tends to be either too intellectualistic or too emotional; but neither the intellect nor the emotions stand for the final depths of man's being. Within man's soul and within the world, the last crisis is moral, and no creed, no religion can deal with that crisis, hardly, indeed, come within sight of it, which cannot confront it with a moral revelation, with a Gospel which is fundamentally, though not exclu vely, moral, with

God revealed in moral personality. Never was there a less "academic" controversy than that between the Church and the Gnostic schools. These latter had much in their favour—fertility of imagination, brilliant speculative and constructive powers, a systematised view of existence. Their views, if we study them in detail, may seem bizarre, even grotesque, but that was not why they failed. Their failure was due to the gulf which separated them from the historic Jesus, from the Son of God made Son of Man (to repeat a formula dear to Irenæus, one of their chief opponents), from the actual worth of Him, the historical Person.

The lesson of the Gnostic controversy is always worth learning. We can never afford to make little of the historical Jesus as compared with the Eternal Christ. Such expressions as "the Christ-Spirit," "potential Christs," and so forth, are, at the least, dangerous, and better avoided. Not only is there a concealed Nestorianism in them, as though our Lord were not, in the language of the *Quicunque Vult*, "One altogether," but they tend to emphasise the thought of Christ as Idea and Principle, rather than as Person. That emphasis is radically different from what is given us in the New Testament. The most profoundly mystical writings in the New Testament are the Gospel and the First Epistle of St. John. And the Johannine stress is laid not upon any religious principle or idea as such, but upon the historic Person in Whom alone the eternal reality, again regarded not as idea but as Person, is fully embodied. As far as concerns the fourth Gospel we do not need to go beyond the classical expression of the truth of the matter which

St. Augustine gives in his confessions (vii. 9). There he admits that in books of the Platonists he found the confession that the Word was with God, was God, was the true light (though even here some reservation should be made to modify his acknowledgment of complete identity), "but that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, that I did not read there." While as to the first Epistle it is only necessary to recall the insistence upon "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," to realise that the Johannine mysticism is one which revolves round faith in the historic Person, Whose mission could be defined as the great moral act of "propitiation for our sins."

The third characteristic of the Gospel as expressed in the Creed has come into prominence in the last paragraph. The Gospel is the Gospel of a transcendent Person, that is, of One whose historical reality is conjoined with another reality, namely, that He is prior to history, and belongs to history, not, as we do, by a birth into it which has happened to us without any exercise whatever of our individual wills, but by a voluntary descent into history from a sphere or form of existence which we conceive of, in so far as that is possible to us, as the sphere proper to God, the supreme transcendent Reality.

This is the essential difference between Jesus Christ and the great heroes of history. We may speak of them as transcendent personalities; but when we do so, we think of their transcendence as relative to the particular age in which they lived, or, in some cases, to all known ages; but we do not think of it as expressing a fundamental contrast between them and the historical order. They were what they were in and through history; Christ was

what He essentially was apart from history, though it was in history that He became what He had not been before. Thus the true proportion of faith loses neither the historical in the mystical, nor the transcendent in the historical.

This transcendent aspect is given in the first article which speaks of Christ, which describes His relationship to God and man; we come to it before we pass on to any events which concern His relationship to the historical order, events which though entirely compatible with that transcendence, and in line with it, do not necessarily, in themselves, express that transcendence. He is God's only Son. Now Israel had been called God's son, and men were the children of the Most Highest; but the idea of Christ's unique Sonship carried a far deeper meaning for the compilers of the Creed. The Creed was probably composed first of all in Greek, and afterwards, whether after a shorter or longer interval, translated into Latin. And the Greek word for "only" is the same word μονογενής, as we find used in connection with the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father in the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. It is hard to think that that passage was not in the minds of those who used this word as an adequate description of Christ.

Further, it should be remembered that some explanation of the fact of a unique Sonship to God is necessary. Unique is not simply a title of honour or affection: it goes beyond the idea of Jesus as the beloved Son, which we meet with in the narratives of the Baptism and the Transfiguration. Nor can the unique character

of the Sonship be intelligibly explained as denoting the special choice of Jesus made by God and sealed at the Baptism : such an interpretation offers no real explanation. No problem, except such as is inherent in the whole conception of the use made of men by God, is involved in the choice of an Isaiah to be a prophet, or a Paul to be an apostle ; but the choice of an individual to be Son of God, in such a way that He alone holds the title, does raise a problem, and in the mere fact of the choice, the "adoptive" Sonship, there is no settlement of it. There is a settlement when the Sonship is regarded as expressive of an essential, uncreated, relationship. This is not to read metaphysics into the Creed, but to find, what we certainly have a right to expect, a true correspondence between the Creed and the witness of the New Testament on the one hand, and contemporary Christian thought on the other.

And then, in reference to us, He is Lord. We have become so accustomed to this word as applied to Christ that we miss the original greatness of its significance. But for a Christian of the first century there was extraordinary significance in the application of the word "Lord," in Greek Κύριος, to Christ. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament the Greek word always represents the divine name of the God of Israel, that name which in its proper Hebrew form the Jews held to be too sacred to pronounce. To speak of Jesus therefore as "the Lord"—a title so common in the Acts and Epistles, and several times found in St. Luke's Gospel—was to confer no merely honorific designation upon Him : it was to think of Him as belonging to the divine sphere,

a fact which comes out strikingly in the First Epistle of St. Peter (ii. 3–5), where the graciousness of the Lord is the graciousness of Jesus Christ, whereas in the thirty-fourth Psalm, from which the quotation is taken, the reference is, of course, to the God of Israel. It is this background of meaning which we ought to keep in mind at this point in the Creed; and here the Creed is exactly in line with what seems to have been the earliest form of Christian confession of faith, as we find it in 1 Corinthians xii. 3, the confession ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ—Jesus is Lord.

So we believe in Jesus Christ, the transcendent Person, God's only Son, Whose Sonship is not confined within the limits of earthly life. The records of human history include such a Person, but to think of Him as no more than history's fairest flower and choicest glory is to lose the final significance of His Person.

Then follow articles which emphasise both the historical and the miraculous character of the Gospel; and in connection with some of them discussion and controversy have grown acute. It has been argued that what we are really concerned with, from the Christian religious point of view, is their symbolic, not their literal, interpretation; or, more precisely, that the religious value of the clauses is independent of their exact character as history.

Now in the first place, the question cannot be brought to a satisfactory answer along the lines of historical criticism. This needs to be kept in mind on both sides of the controversy. We ought not to expect such coercive testimony to the miraculous, that is to an especial form of God's dealing with men, as will do away

with the necessity for faith. There is much of value still to be found in such a celebrated book of Christian apologetics as was Paley's *Evidences*, but the danger which is always near to the apologist, even now when the limitations of his art are more clearly understood, is of forgetting that if he is dealing with subject-matter which possesses, as a whole, a transcendental character, he cannot expect evidence of quite the same conclusive kind as he would hope to obtain were there no question of anything transcendental being involved. For however truly it may be affirmed that the Lord's birth from a virgin and His bodily resurrection are facts of history, they are not so in precisely the same sense as the battle of Hastings or the great fire of London: their religious significance as facts in the earthly life of a transcendent Person gives them a certain transcendent quality of their own; they possess that quality, not directly in themselves (for birth from a virgin and bodily resurrection are not, inevitably, in their own right, facts to which a religious and transcendental character adheres) but by derivation and connection. Thus, to suppose that they are susceptible of proof after the manner of the ordinary events of history, whereof records have come down to us, is to fail in appreciation of their religious character. But if such a warning needs to be addressed to those who walk too confidently in tracks which were marked out by the rigoristic apologetic of Paley, a similar warning should go to all those who believe that the question is one which can be settled by minute textual study and by the ordinary processes of historical criticism, and that the experts in those sciences have the right to bring in a

negative verdict. Once again, the limitations imposed upon historical investigation by the character of the subject-matter are overlooked. The remedy for this neglect is not to be found in the contrast made by certain of the Roman Catholic Modernists between fact and faith, as though the question of fact were irrelevant and "faith-values" were all that mattered, but by a realisation that facts may, just because they possess a particular value for faith, fall outside the circle within which historical investigation can safely pass to conclusions.

Secondly, the whole question is bound up with belief in Christ the transcendent Person. The uniqueness of events in His life cannot be detached from His personal uniqueness. A priori consideration and deductive argumentation are unavoidable. Such considerations may be true or false, such argumentation good or bad. Presuppositions are to be found on both sides of the controversy: to one man it is inconceivable that a child born of human parents should not be merely an additional human person; to another, the virgin-birth and the "nature-miracles" seem inconsistent with the reality of the likeness of the Lord's humanity to ours. To Dr. Rashdall, as quoted, from an unpublished treatise, in Professor Lake's *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (p. 269), "the disappearance or absolute annihilation, the reanimation, or the sudden transformation into something not quite material and yet not quite spiritual, of a really dead body, would involve the violation of the best ascertained laws of physics, chemistry, and physiology. Were the testimony fifty times stronger than it is, any hypothesis

would be more possible than that." Here it is presupposed that the laws above-mentioned can give an almost decisive verdict as to what was possible or not possible in connection with the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection. I cannot regard such a presupposition as valid. On the other hand, the idea that the Virgin-birth was necessary for the breaking of the entail of sin is one that depends upon presuppositions as to the nature and transmission of original sin, and as to the method whereby freedom from it could be secured, which does not necessarily appeal to one who feels no difficulty as to the historical truth of the article of the Creed.

Presuppositions and the narratives of miracles in the Gospels may be brought together in some such question as this: Granted the Incarnation of the Son of God, and taking the narratives as they stand (not any miraculous narratives, but these particular ones), does the one cohere with the other? Or the question may be put slightly otherwise: Is it rational to accept the one and deny the other? And, regarding the matter from the standpoint of one who tries to forecast the future development of Christian thought, we may ask, Will the Gospel of the transcendent Son remain, if the lesser miracles are given up?

It is obvious that those who are dissatisfied with the presentation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, as it has come down to us from the age of the great councils which were concerned with the expression of the true faith as to the Person of Christ, will not necessarily be moved to answer such questions as the above in a way which assumes the validity of the historic statement of

that faith. All that I would urge at this point with regard to that position is that those who hold to it have to reckon not only with the doctrine of the Incarnation as presented in the "Definition" of the council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451, but with the doctrine as presented in the writings of St. Paul and St. John. For both of them the Incarnation rests on the belief that Jesus Christ is the pre-existent Son of God. If that belief is surrendered, or held in suspense, the doctrine which follows is not one of incarnation at all, but of divine immanence, a special indwelling of God in the man Jesus. This result comes out very clearly in the small book entitled *What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?* by the Halle historian of dogma, Friedrich Loofs. It is written in a religious, and even devout, temper, and the doctrine set forth in it goes far deeper than we usually associate with continental theologians of that Liberal school, to which, broadly speaking, Loofs belongs. But it is not a doctrine of the pre-existent Son of God, and it is not a doctrine of incarnation.

Accordingly, if the miraculous narratives in the Gospels are, so far as their literal sense is involved, rejected as being out of harmony with the reality of the Incarnation and the truth of Christ's human nature, we have a right to ask whether those who reject them are content to start, in their doctrinal interpretation of the Person of Christ, where St. Paul and St. John start. If they cannot confidently affirm that they do, then the difference of the question of miracles between themselves and those who accept the Gospel narratives according to their literal meaning, may be but the surface-expression

of a far more fundamental disunion underlying the discussion of the miracles.

Those whose beliefs as to the Incarnation are those of St. Paul and St. John may well feel assured that a coherent religion is given in the conception of the Son of God entering this world, and in the history answering thereto. They need not say dogmatically that an incarnation unattended by miracles would be unthinkable, and they may learn to keep a true proportion in their thoughts from the fact that it has been possible in the past to accept the Virgin-birth, without accepting the Pauline Christology with its doctrine of Christ's pre-existence. That shows, as was said earlier, that the Virgin-birth does not, of itself, necessarily involve the true transcendence of Christ. But it is quite another thing to assume that there is no logical inner connection between the Pauline and Johannine Christology and the Virgin-birth, and that the acceptance of the former has no bearing (or even an unfavourable one) upon the acceptance of the latter. And since, during so many centuries, the Christian consciousness has linked the Virgin-birth closely with the doctrine of the Incarnation, and has seen in the Virgin-birth an appropriateness which, though it may rest to some large extent on an æsthetic judgment, is not therefore lacking in logical value, it is, at least, very rash to assume that disbelief in the truth of the Virgin-birth, were that to grow, would not affect adversely belief in the transcendence of Christ.

The articles which follow, while they say nothing as to our Lord's earthly ministry, give concise expression to much that in the New Testament has a place in His

redemptive work, from the Passion onwards. And in connection with them three points need to be touched on.

In the first place, there is no direct mention of the Atonement; there is no interpretation of the Passion; the Creed is, in words, purely historical. Yet it would be going altogether too far to suppose that there was no latent doctrinal implication. To no one who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He was the only Son of God, could the death of Jesus be a fact of history needing no great explanation. The early chapters of Acts contain no formal doctrine of atonement, but how far the Passion is from being presented as a bare fact of history is evident when we read in St. Peter's speech, delivered as early as the day of Pentecost, that the handing over of Jesus to the Jews, as a result of which He was wickedly put to death, was something which was not only foreknown by God but took place according to God's determined purpose: "betrayed in the predestined course of God's deliberate purpose" is Dr. Moffatt's translation. And in the Creed the historical incident implies, not a particular doctrine, but an immense religious meaning and relevance.

For us, at the present time, it is perhaps especially useful to think of the suffering of Christ as giving the full range of the divine sympathy. God has taken to Himself human experience in taking our flesh; the bonds which have united man to God ever since man was made in God's image, which were wrought afresh in the Incarnation, have been drawn closer through the most poignant fellowship of suffering. It is part of the Gospel, as the writer to the Hebrews was,

beyond others of his generation, enabled to see and declare. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted"; "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"; "though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered"; "Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man." Such passages as these, when taken with the exalted conception of the Passion of Christ which the writer held, show how the deep human longing to be sure of God's presence and sympathy in trouble and suffering was confessed as having been met and honoured through the Passion of Jesus, that Passion which is not an isolated act of the past, but an act ever alive through its unique and inexhaustible power. The Passion gives us a doctrine of "a suffering God" as intimate and encouraging as, and much more profound than, many of the speculations on the subject with which we have been familiarised. For in Christ we are presented with, at the least, the supreme example of the innocent sufferer—that hardest crux of suffering, viewed as a speculative problem; and when we penetrate within that to the real ethical depths and come face to face with the truth of the interpenetration of suffering and sin, and of sin as the sting of suffering, the Passion does not fail us, for in it not only was Christ the innocent sufferer, but He took upon Himself the fulness of sin's shame for us.

If the Passion of Christ were to Christians of to-day anything comparable with what it has been to the saints of all ages, we should hear little of any demand for a

present suffering God. That demand springs from a failure to understand that God has really ever done anything which joins Him with us in the experience of suffering, and, particularly, from a failure to gauge the relevance of the Cross. Hence springs either a spirit of atheistic rebellion against the universe or the construction of a doctrine of a suffering God, which may be more or less in touch with the New Testament, but also possesses a thoroughly unstable element, the outcome of a particular age and particular temperaments. The ethical danger connected with the doctrine is the one, natural enough in an age when human self-consciousness as a whole is so great, of making man rather than God the religious centre, and of conforming the working out of God's purposes to what are supposed to be man's most pressing, and therefore legitimate, religious needs. And the great truth resident in the saying that "a thousand years are with the Lord as one day" is forgotten.

Then secondly, and in vital connection with what has just been said, the Resurrection of our Lord means the absolute certainty of the triumph of Goodness. Had the Cross been the end for Christ, His history would, in the light that it threw—a light that would indeed be darkness—upon the problem of man's final worth and destiny, be the most disheartening thing in the annals of humanity. But the Resurrection means both the justification of God and the hope of man. It carries with it the assurance of an irreversible triumph. And the Resurrection is much more than the guarantee of human survival after death: it is the first-fruits of a glorified humanity. For survival in itself is neither a religious

nor, necessarily, an inspiring idea: the idea becomes such only in respect of the conditions of survival. But the Resurrection, as set before us in the New Testament, is both the act of God and the preservation of the completeness of human nature. Thus the Gospel of the Resurrection is the Gospel of the triumph of God's love and power, and of the share of man in that triumph. That the rejection of the Gospel narratives according to their literal sense would do away with that triumph is an assertion too sweeping to be just, and one that would be vigorously combated by those who deny that there was any resurrection of the body of Jesus; but I cannot think that such rejection leaves the glory of the Resurrection unaffected, or is able to supply a doctrine possessed of equal religious power.

And thirdly, there is the assertion of future judgment. The form of words suggests a visible return from the Father's right hand in heaven. But to suppose that, for the Creed, heaven and the Father's right hand are merely local conceptions would be to rule out at this point transcendental conceptions in respect of God. The compilers of the Creed did not believe, any more than we do, that God could be the object of sense-perception, or that He was limited by space; accordingly, the truth of the articles is not bound up with the Ptolemaic astronomy. Of the ethical value of this belief there can be no doubt. The idea of judgment is one of the most serious moral ideas which man has ever entertained. And the conception of judgment, while it has no meaning apart from the value of personality, is one which in a moral universe must necessarily be held in relation to

persons. Where there is moral personality there judgment follows as the proof that such personality is not something alien to the universe, but exists as a fact within a moral order. And the Creed represents that judgment as not simply a self-acting law, but as the pronouncement of a Judge. This does not imply any merely external action, but clothes the moral law with the higher dignity of personality. Law conceived of as impersonal justice may become rigid and mechanical, but law expressed through a person with whom the law is one has that kinship with the persons judged which is essential to perfect judgment. In our earthly life the laws which are man's creation, and the persons administering them, are imperfect; in the divine judgment to be exercised by Christ the perfection of justice will be revealed.

We have seen something of the high claims which the Creed makes for Christ; what have we to say as to their truth? The answer to the question would go to the heart of Christian apologetics. Here it must suffice to call attention to the fact that the statements of the Creed have their counterpart within Christian experience in the difference which Christ makes as Ideal, Friend, Saviour, Lord. Experience is not its own guarantor; it must be ready to submit to analysis and examination. But to try to explain away Christian experience from the New Testament onwards as a gigantic instance of delusion and self-hypnotism is to embark upon a course for which in the beginning there is little defence except the assumption that the religious side of human nature is a pathological phenomenon, a degeneration, while all the

later stages of the investigation have to be controlled in the interests of this dogma. And that means that no reality must be allowed to the life of the Church at its strongest, most characteristic, and most persistent point. For the truth is not simply that the cumulative and varied experience and testimony of the Church is a tremendous thing, but that experience is ever returning to one centre, and flowing out from it. That experience is grounded in Christ and has no meaning apart from Christ, and the nobler it is, and the richer are its fruits, the more does it mean Christ, so that through it Christ is being fulfilled all in all. It is this which keeps the Creed ever living and fresh, and is the shield of the Church's faith.

IV

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST

Except for the change from the primitive "and" to the reiterated "I believe," there is no difference between what stands in our Apostles' Creed to-day and what always stood in the Creed at this point. Here there is no sign of the presence of controversy such as we were able to note as influencing the expression of the doctrine of the Son. And this is due to the fact that while there was no doubt at all as to the existence, the power and the operations of the Holy Spirit, the Christian consciousness had hardly begun to reflect on what was involved, for thought, in the confession of the Holy Spirit. Such theological differences as appeared inevitably limited themselves to the Person of Christ. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" had to be given as adequate an answer as possible before those who did not doubt that there was a Holy Ghost could be ready for a theology concerning Him.

In respect of the Person of Christ, it was for the settlement of the problem of His relationship both to God and to man that Christian thought was active. If Christ was both divine and human, how could that fact be explained? It was the revelation of the historic Person which set the terms of the problem. But the

conditions for similar questions as to the Holy Spirit were not present; there was nothing that could be set as a parallel with the historic life and its theological interpretation as Incarnation. Accordingly, with regard to the Holy Spirit there was, at first, not only very little controversy but very little ordered thought, and the absence of ordered thought involved a poverty of terminology as compared with the expression of the doctrine of the Son of God made Son of Man. Early Christian doctrine is for the historical inquirer the history of the discovery of adequate forms of thought, or rather, of such conceptions as made the nearest approach to adequacy and served the cause of interpretation best; and also of an adequate terminology wherein those forms of thought could be contained, and whereby they could be expressed. But all the concentration involved in this double process was at first spent upon the doctrine of the Son; that doctrine as laid down in such apparently simple words in the Creed of the second century uttered a challenge and stood out from a background of controversy, but when Christians confessed their faith in the Holy Ghost they had not in their minds any thought of controversy at all. But besides that (and here we must note the other side, the less satisfactory side of the absence of controversy), there was a certain lack of a proper understanding of what was involved in faith in the Holy Ghost. Men could not express their belief in the Son of God, incarnate, suffering, risen, ascended, without a real hold upon the meaning of so tremendous a confession. A tremendous confession it was and is, but one which is helped by the mind's power to grasp and

realise the concrete and the historical. The revelation of the Son, like the creative activity of the Father, was something which had taken place in the external world; the facts did not, indeed, interpret themselves, as we see clearly enough from the Gospels; but the facts were there, and facts within the external order are a great help. Such help was not available in connection with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Apart from extraordinary phenomena like ecstatic preaching and speaking with tongues, which came to be looked on with considerable disfavour in the second century, owing to their association with the sect of the Montanists who in more ways than one gave offence to the general feeling of the Church, the external world gave the Christian consciousness no food for thought and expression. It was within man that the presence and work of the Holy Spirit were to be looked for. His self-manifestations there were no less real than the self-manifestations of the Son through the facts of His incarnate life, but they were more subtle, less easily understood, less able to lead to immediate deductions, than was the case with facts, which while they were much more, were also incidents in the world of sense. Moreover, there is this further point to remember, involving a difficulty with which the Church was faced and from which we are not free: God Himself, essentially, in His own nature, is "Spirit." "Spirit" is a title proper to God, apart altogether from the designation of a Person within the Godhead as "the Holy Spirit." "God is Spirit": this is fundamental truth just as "God is love" is fundamental truth; no Christian would ever have thought of denying that God the Father Almighty,

the Creator, was Spirit. Similarly with regard to the Son of God: His divine nature, that nature whereby He is eternally one with the Father, is "Spirit." In the second century homily or sermon, erroneously called the Second Epistle of Clement, it is said of Christ, that He, being first of all Spirit, became flesh. Accordingly, whereas the idea of the "Son" suggests at once a reference to some one other than the Father, the idea of the Holy Spirit does not with equal immediacy compel the thought of some one who can be personally distinguished from the Father and from the Son. We have to probe beneath the name before we can begin to appreciate how the name stands for a further personal distinction within the Godhead.

In the first place, it may be well to consider briefly the way in which the doctrine of the Spirit passed through its various stages of development within the Old Testament and within the New Testament, and became the common heritage of the Church. The thought of the Spirit of God is the first theological thought in the Bible. Right at the beginning of all revelation, at the dawn of creation, we read in the opening verses of Genesis that, while all was yet unformed and chaos, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The expression most common in the Old Testament is "the spirit of God," or "the spirit of the Lord." The phrase so familiar to us, "the Holy Spirit," occurs in only two passages, in the fifty-first Psalm, in the words, "Take not thy holy spirit from me," and in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, where we read that the house of Israel "grieved his holy spirit." The idea of

the Spirit of God is exceedingly common, and, in various ways, stands for the life of God going forth as energy, directed towards man, and filling man with its own power. No department of human life lacks traces of the working of the Spirit of God. Physical endowments, intellectual ability, such craftsmanship as was shown by the men entrusted with the construction of the Tabernacle, can all be referred to the Spirit. The working of the Spirit is to be seen more clearly in the inspiration of the prophets, and upon the Messiah is to rest the Spirit of the Lord, revealed in six modes of manifestation. The relationship of the Spirit to the moral and religious life of the individual is not prominent in the Old Testament, but as the importance of the individual came to be more fully emphasised in Hebraic religion, this aspect of the Spirit's work began to gain in importance. With regard to the question of the "personality" of the Spirit there can be no doubt that the Spirit is spoken of as we should speak of a person, and that the work of the Spirit is work which only a person can do. But it is only when we come to the sapiential literature, to such books as Proverbs (though there the thought is of Wisdom, not of the Spirit), and Wisdom, that a personification of the Spirit, involving something other than the mere identification of the Spirit with God, begins to appear.

When we pass to the New Testament, we find an immense development almost immediately taking place. The New Testament is pre-eminently a book of the Spirit; the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the significance of the Holy Spirit's activity, is one of the bonds of unity between different portions of the book. From the

birth of Jesus onwards, the whole Christian dispensation is a dispensation of the Holy Spirit. There is a passage in Irenæus which speaks of the Holy Spirit as present in the dispensations of the Father and the Son; the thought is of the Old and the New Testaments. Now, while the presence of the Spirit in the Old Testament dispensation is, as we have seen, clear enough, the full interpretation and meaning is not given there. In the New Testament, the idea of the Spirit takes to itself form and colour, and, therewith, increased power, so that the bearing of the idea of the Spirit upon the nature of God and God's self-revelation to man becomes altogether clearer. Consider the prominence of the Holy Spirit in connection with our Lord's earthly ministry, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. His birth, baptism, and temptation are intimately related to the presence and work of the Spirit; such striking acts of power as the casting out of demons are a proof of the activity of the Spirit; it is, as recorded by St. Luke, in a moment of exultation "in the Holy Spirit" that the Lord uttered the profoundest expression of His consciousness of unity with the Father in the perfect reciprocity of knowledge which Each has of the Other, which is to be found in the Synoptic Gospels. And when He prepares His disciples for the experiences that lie before them, it is because the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of their Father, will speak through and for them, that they can put from them all anxiety as to how they will bear themselves in great crises of their lives.

The impression given by the Gospels is deepened in the Acts. In this book we have a veritable Gospel of the Holy Ghost. Close to the beginning of the book

stands the record of the day of Pentecost and of the outpouring of the Spirit, and throughout the Acts there is an ever-present sense of the Church and its leaders as guided, inspired, and controlled at every stage by the intimate and direct working upon it of the Holy Spirit, approving, restraining, even legislating. Philip's colloquy with the Ethiopian eunuch, Peter's journey to see Cornelius, the route taken by Paul which led him to the narrow straits dividing Asia from Europe, are all, in themselves or in their consequences, among the most vivid and momentous of the events which the historian of the early Church records; and in each one of them the decisive word is spoken by the Spirit.

The history of the Spirit's work in the Acts passes for us, as we read the New Testament in the received order of the books, into the theology of the Spirit in St. Paul's Epistles. Here there is an immense wealth of ideas; we may note three points in particular. Firstly, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the individual's religious life which was, as we saw, comparatively unemphasised in the Old Testament, is represented as a close and living one. In the moral life of the Christian, in its manifested graces, there is to be seen the presence and working of the Spirit. Take two passages in illustration: one, the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul has just been speaking of the wretched state of a man, who, knowing and desiring the good, yet finds himself unable to practise it; the law of sin within his members is stronger than the law of God within his heart. That is one great fact of experience, but there is another, the freedom from this

miserable indecision, this unharmonised life, which God has opened to man through Christ. And the moment the Apostle passes to the exposition of this freedom, the whole sweep of his thought is filled with the presence of the Spirit, and the new life appears to him as a life "in the Spirit," because the secret of its character is the fact of the indwelling of the Spirit within the Christian believer. The other passage is the familiar contrast in the Epistle to the Galatians between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The thought is not simply of the contrast between the carnal and spiritual elements in man, but of a self-expression which results from the unchecked activity of the lower nature, and that which springs from the Spirit of God revealed as the higher nature in man. And so St. Paul exhorts his readers—if the Spirit is the inner strength of the Christian life let them see to it that their outward practice conforms thereto.

Secondly, the presence of the Holy Spirit was to be seen not only in the character and conduct of the believer, but also in certain powers related to the more intellectual or emotional side of life, in gifts which could be described as "spiritual," such as prophecy and speaking with tongues. These gifts, though widely-diffused, at least in Corinth, among members of the Church, yet speak of a particular manifestation of the Spirit through individuals, and not of an endowment which should be seen in all believers. And it is significant that St. Paul's conviction of the energy of the Spirit revealed in these manifestations did not suggest to him that he was debarred from making practical

regulations for occasions when members of the Church were prophesying or speaking with tongues. The spirit of freedom was also the spirit of order.

Then, thirdly, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, while the idea of the relationship of Christ and the Church is not formulated into a theology, yet, in that passage where St. Paul speaks of the one Body and the one Spirit, we can see the emergence of the sense of the immanence of the Spirit in the whole life of the Church which was afterwards to be developed in the conception of the Church as the Spirit-bearing body.

Meanwhile, the language used is increasingly favourable to the belief that the Spirit is personal life and not impersonal energy. This is not inconsistent with the absence of a fixed terminology, and with a lack of clean-cut distinctions. This lack is very evident in the eighth chapter of Romans, verses 9–11, where the expressions "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," and "Christ" are used in such a way that hardly any distinction whatever can be drawn between them, a passage with which the end of the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians may be compared as illustrating the same undefined use of the title "The Spirit." There is wealth of expression, but no settled terminology. Nevertheless, there are two considerations to be kept in mind as bearing both upon the personality of the Spirit, and upon that personality as associated, not identical, with God or Christ. In the first place, the work of the Spirit is essentially what we may call work proceeding from a personal agent, not from an impersonal energy. This is clearly the case when St. Paul speaks of the Spirit as bearing witness

with our spirit, and as helping our infirmity, by making intercessions for us which are beyond our power. We have passed beyond the stage where the Spirit could be regarded as some form of energy working in man, and leading him onwards towards God, and the picture presented to us is comparable with the essentially personal way in which, in the Acts, the Spirit is described as working. And, further, there are passages where the Spirit is associated with God and Christ in such terms as suggest that as personality is to be ascribed to Them, so must it be to Him. In the conclusion of 2 Corinthians, where the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is conjoined with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, it does not seem natural to interpret the words "the Holy Spirit" as though they represented only an impersonal force. Such a force would obviously be the force or energy of God, but the introduction of such an idea does not suggest itself, and, indeed, unbalances the verse, which rather suggests a distinction between the Holy Spirit and God analogous to the distinction between Christ and God, a distinction involving the personality of the Holy Spirit as existing in its own right, and not constituted by the personality of Another. And in the eighth chapter of Romans, after St. Paul has spoken of the Spirit as bearing witness along with our spirit that we are children of God, he continues, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The manner in which the Spirit and the Spirit's work are spoken of in relation to God and Christ makes it natural to understand St. Paul as expressing the idea of the distinct personality of the Spirit.

Whatever doubt there may be as to the meaning of the references to the Spirit in St. Paul's writing, that doubt is greatly lessened in the testimony of the fourth Gospel. And with regard to the problem of the historical character of this Gospel there is only one question which need be raised at this point. Is the writer a true exponent and interpreter of the mind of Christ? If he is, then other questions do not become unimportant, but they become a great deal less important. If the writer, whoever he was, truly expounded the mind of Christ then we have a right to take the Gospel as conveying what our Lord would have us know, and as a true means of religious instruction. It well may be, as Dr. Swete once said in a lecture, that St. John himself felt the difficulty of discriminating between material in the Gospel which represented his own reflections and material which could be directly attributed to words spoken by Christ. There are one or two passages where the difficulty of distinguishing the words of Christ from the words of the writer is notably present. But if we have a right to believe that the writer conveys to us the teaching of his Master, it is not of first-rate importance whether that teaching was given in verbal form during the earthly ministry or whether, as the true teaching of the ascended and glorified Lord, it was given to the Church through the inspired agency of the writer. In any case, if we believe that this Gospel which occupies an unique place in the world's spiritual literature is no rhapsodical or didactic fabrication, but enshrines a true message from Christ to His Church, we have the right to take the teaching as to the Holy Spirit which it contains as that which the Lord would

have us believe of Him Who, in the work of the revelation of God and the salvation of man, took the place which the Lord had held in the days of His flesh. In the discourses before the Passion, Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit Who is to replace Him, and interpret Him, and guide the disciples, and bring conviction to the world; and it is, I believe, impossible to frame a satisfactory argument for the identification of the Spirit in these passages with the glorified Christ, or for the representation of the Spirit as impersonal energy.

It is this teaching of the New Testament which underlies later Christian doctrine. Gradually, conditions became more favourable for a theology of the Holy Spirit. Those conditions had not arisen by the middle of the second century but they begin to appear soon afterwards. By the end of the century it is clear that Christians were feeling after a doctrine of the Holy Spirit which should express the truth of this relationship to God and Christ. And when at the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325, the doctrine of the divine nature of the Son of God was defined by the introduction into the conciliar Creed of the word ὁμοούσιος which asserted the essential unity of being of the Father and the Son, and when, in the years subsequent to Nicaea, though controversy as to the Son of God was by no means at an end, it nevertheless became evident that no doctrine could establish itself which was disloyal to, or tried to put on one side, that central confession of the Nicene Creed, then the time was ripening for a parallel definition of doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. And that definition was not long delayed. The Creed which we repeat

at the Eucharist was neither the original Nicene Creed, nor was it drawn up by the Council of Constantinople in 381. But there is good reason for believing that the Creed was approved by that Council, and though no word is used of the Holy Spirit which is a close parallel to the word ὁμοούσιος used of the Son, the effect of the Creed is to rank the Holy Spirit, clearly conceived of as personal, with the Father and the Son. And in respect of the divine uncreated nature of the Spirit it is worth remembering that there was one cause which led more immediately to the thought of the deity of the Spirit than could be the case with respect to the Son. Whereas the idea of Sonship does, if the argument from the human to the divine is pressed with literal exactness, suggest a beginning, whether in time, or, as the Arians asserted, before time, the idea of spirit makes no such suggestion, and is indeed, as we have seen, a true description of the eternal God. It was only when the argument from order was emphasised, that is, the fact that the Holy Spirit was regularly named after the Son, an order which was universally regarded within the Church as corresponding to an order within the Godhead, that the idea of the Holy Spirit as a creature could gain acceptance. This took place in Arian circles, and, much earlier, had found partial expression in Origen, who, on one side of his very varied thoughts strongly emphasised the subordination of the Son to the Father, and as an interpreter of Scripture felt bound to include the Holy Spirit among the "all things" which had come into existence through the Son. Yet he was far from being consistent with himself in his doctrine of the Spirit.

And the general impression which we obtain of the Church's thought previous to the end of the fourth century is of a loosely-formulated conviction that the Holy Spirit, like the Son, was in a unique way from the Father and belonged essentially to the divine sphere. His relation to the Father was, in dependence upon St. John xv. 27, described as "procession," that is, "going forth," and whatever defence from New Testament implications may be found for the addition "and the Son" to the clause in the Creed which originally spoke of a procession from the Father alone, that addition, it should be remembered, is one which crept in, rather than was deliberately inserted, in the West from the sixth century onwards. It is not certain that it was made by the Council of Toledo in A.D. 589.

So much for a brief sketch of the Biblical conceptions of the Spirit of God and of the Church's doctrine with regard to Him, a sketch which has unavoidably carried us some distance away from the simple words of the Apostles' Creed. Now we may go on and ask, What is given to us as value for spiritual life in the thought of the Holy Spirit?

First of all, as the Passion of Christ gives to us all that we need in respect of the conception of a suffering God, similarly the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit gives us all that we need for the satisfaction of the idea of the divine immanence, of the indwelling of the divine life in the universe, including man. The idea of divine immanence is immensely valuable. In itself it is a most potent corrective of every kind of materialism, since materialism or naturalism—to use a rather more adequate

term—shuts up its adherents into the belief that the whole of the natural order is self-sufficing, and that no place can be found for the transcendental conception of the natural order as merely one piece, and not the most important piece, of reality, and of its existence and life as something given and upheld by God. But it is also exceptionally easy for the idea of the divine immanence to be misapplied and abused, so that there results a pantheistic merging of God in the world, and the reaction from materialism comes round, full circle, to very nearly the point from which it started, the point where no discrimination between God and the world is apprehended. In both naturalism and pantheism the world is all that really remains at the end of the process of thought, though the character of the world is conceived of differently in the two systems. But a true notion of God's relationship to the world allows of a real distinction between Him and it. Now in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit there is essentially present the thought of God as working in the world and in man. But, at the same time, God's independence of the world is apparent. For the doctrine of the Holy Spirit implies the free, vital energy of a personal God working worldwards and man-wards. The idea of the Spirit implies from the opening verses of Genesis the action of a gracious God Who cannot be identified with creation. In the doctrine of the Holy Spirit there is no danger of God's transcendence being forgotten, and so it enables us both to think of the Holy Spirit as God, present in the world to inspire and guide, and also to receive according to its natural interpretation the opening

words of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father which art in heaven.

Secondly, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit gives us security for our belief that the immanence of God in the world is essentially a holy immanence, that is, to adopt Matthew Arnold's well-known saying, that there is in the world a "power not ourselves which makes for righteousness." That "power" is not, as Arnold unfortunately regarded it, a general tendency, an idea which does not reach to the level of personality, but the Holy Spirit, revealing and effecting God's immanence in the world, in ourselves as conscience and in history as progress.

Conscience is the profoundest fact of our own human nature of which we have any direct experience. But while it is the profoundest, it is not obviously the most rational, though we are compelled to find some rational explanation of it, an explanation and not an explaining away. It is not in itself an immediately rational fact that we should find within ourselves something which so powerfully obstructs us from doing many things which we should like to do, and so powerfully commands us, and even drives us forward, to do many things which we do not wish to do. But a rational account can be given of conscience if we conceive of it, not under impersonal imagery, as a particular kind of force directed to particular ends and stored up within us, but as the expression or the register, not necessarily a perfect one, of the voice of God, so that in conscience the Holy Spirit of God, dwelling within us, makes Himself heard.

Then there is progress. There are those who regard

the whole idea of progress as delusion. But even with the war so little removed from us in time, and still present with us in its consequences and our many distresses, I find it impossible to look on the idea of progress as the supreme instance of man's faculty for myth-making. History is full enough of reversions and degenerations, but on the whole it becomes more difficult to identify right with might and to preach a doctrine of the devil take the hindmost. In that increasing difficulty is the mark of progress. It was felt as an immense difficulty by Germany, for though Germany acted on the identification of might with right she always had to find some defence of her action which involved the distinction between the two. She did not, and could not, talk to the world like a book of Bernhardi's or as an immoral or super-moral prophecy of Nietzsche's. It is an immense difficulty in industrial troubles. Of course, the difficulty is constantly solved in practice, and might and right are identified. But that kind of practice, while it reveals clearly enough man's sinful condition and his remoteness from moral perfection, is less significant for a judgment upon man's history and development than is the gradual diffusion of an atmosphere which is more and more clearly seen to be completely antagonistic to such practice. Ethical progress, involving this most important distinction between might and right, is the sign of the working of the Holy Spirit upon and within history. And when we thus conceive of the moral developments of human life, we realise that everything in the world which is good and true—the beautiful also, for that, too, has a divine meaning and

value—represents the action within the world and within ourselves of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is the Guide to truth. Most clearly is He so represented in the discourse before the Passion in St. John's Gospel. There the assurance is given that the Paraclete will teach, will remind, will bear witness, will guide into all truth, will unfold the future; it is He Who will interpret Christ to the Church and the world.

Light is thrown upon this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work by that notable passage in the First Epistle of St. Peter which declares how the prophets searched what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. There we have the key to the inspiration of Scripture, with the preparation under the old covenant and the fulfilment in the new. And the guidance into truth is not an operation of the Spirit which is to be limited to men or books commonly spoken of as "inspired." All Christian believers, at whatever stage of Christian life they are, whether a catechumen saved alive from the degradation of a horrible and cruel idolatry, or an aged saint far advanced on the road towards spiritual maturity, express the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. To the Christian Gospel as a transcendental Gospel there is a corresponding response. The saints, the martyrs, the great pastors of the Church, the glowing words of the Church's prayers and hymns, the spiritual enthusiasm and mystic devotion which is our heritage, are not mere facts of the past but live on as a perpetual inspiration, and from

their fires new fires are ever being kindled. And all alike receive their warmth and light from that central fire which is the presence of the Holy Ghost in the world, from the inexhaustible activity of Whose divine life there is supplied the power to meet and answer to new times and fresh needs. It is not an accident that one so far advanced in Christian saintliness as Mr. Keble said that after the Lord's Prayer nothing helped the spiritual life so much as the repetition of the *Veni Creator*.

So the mystery of God, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, in the Godhead Itself and as the Godhead is revealed to us, is made complete in the thought of the Holy Spirit. It is not an altogether easy thought, nor one whereof the religious value is immediately apparent and usable. And just because of this we may find that the more we look into it the richer it becomes, and the more illumination it can shed upon the nature of God, and the dealings of God with man.

V

CREED, LIFE AND HOPE

With the words "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the Creed in one sense comes to an end. Faith is essentially something that moves from person to person. Faith in anything created or in the graces and privileges and promises of the Gospel does not stand on the same footing, does not possess the same full personal note. The commentator, Rufinus of Aquileia, to whom reference has already been made, noted this in the distinction which he made between the presence and absence of the preposition *in* at certain points in the Creed. He remarked that the presence of the preposition signified a belief in Divine Persons, while its absence meant that the reference was only to created things or to mysteries. Nevertheless, such a faith as has now been expressed—in Father, Son and Holy Spirit—necessarily reacts upon the whole of life, and that not only by inducing one kind of life rather than another, but by leading on to the belief that in life there are certain facts, possibilities and hopes of a specifically religious character. And with regard to these we speak of belief, because the Church, forgiveness and eternal life cannot be formally demonstrated as realities. They offer themselves to faith, not to sight. Thus, the Church regarded from one point of view and

that, in itself, a legitimate one, is simply an association of human beings who make up one of the many similar societies which result from men and women coming together into a group or organisation for particular purposes. But the Christian view of the Church is something not merely superadded to this, but really distinct from it. According to this view the Church is not a voluntary association of persons intent upon exploring the possibilities of religion and on the look-out for spiritual experience; it is not fundamentally a human association at all, the result of the operation of human wills and owing its existence to human initiative, but it is a supernatural creation and gift of God. This is what the Church is primarily; only in a quite secondary sense is it a human society; and there is this much to be said in praise of the idea of the Church as something invisible, that the supernatural God-created character of the Church is thereby made evident. That idea of an invisible Church is certainly not the idea contained in the Creed; yet, though the Church is visible it is none the less a mystery, and it is to faith alone that the true meaning of the visible society is given.

The idea of the forgiveness of sins must be similarly apprehended. From one point of view, forgiveness is no more than a particular human experience. Life is made up of experiences, of joy and comfort and peace of mind, of sorrow and distraction, and with regard to them we do not normally look beyond the circumstances immediately responsible for their uprising, nor seek to discover their connection with a reality that transcends human life and all the experiences which it contains. And forgiveness

may be regarded as no more than a psychological phenomenon, sprung from a certain reaction between the individual's mind and certain facts of his past life, and expressing an adjustment at which he has arrived. But the truth about forgiveness as revealed to Christian faith is that forgiveness is a divine act before it is a human experience. It is not merely or principally an experience but an objective gift of God, a dispensation of His grace dealing with sin. Thus forgiveness is a fact before it is an experience; the woman who was a sinner, who bathed our Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, had, while she was so ministering to Him, no experience of forgiveness; but in her work of love Christ saw the proof of the forgiveness of her sins.

In the Creed we further express our belief in the Resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Here we have to do not with a mere hope, nor with a conclusion based upon considerations of general probability or arrived at as a result of a process of argument, such as we possess in that great example of an attempt to find a formal proof of immortality which is to be found in the *Phædo* of Plato. But Christian faith in eternal life rests upon the promises of God and upon Christ's resurrection as the first-fruits of ours. And just as Christ's resurrection cannot be demonstrated in such a way as to leave no room for faith, as there is still a gap which only faith can pass, in however convincing a way the evidence for this resurrection may be set forth, so is it with our resurrection and eternal life: our attitude is, in the end, an attitude of faith.

Now if Christian faith in the Father, and the Son,

and the Holy Spirit, is no delusion but answers to truth, it is only natural that that faith should be constantly sustained and enlarged, that it should gain a fuller content and a richer colour in the experiences of life, that, as a result of the creating and redeeming and sanctifying action of God, there should arise from humanity an answer corresponding to that action and worthy of that action—so far as that is possible for man—an answer of gratitude and love. This means that, for the Christian, life at all points has a supernatural quality. We think most truly of life when we think of it in terms of God's gifts to us. The true environment of our lives is not the particular environment of our family, or town, or business, but the invisible spiritual Kingdom of God, whence the divine graces descend upon us. That environment never changes ; but the supernatural character of life emerges most clearly, and receives its most intensive witness, at certain points, a fact not in any way inconsistent with the supernatural quality of life as a whole. Thus the home and the state are most truly God-given ; the family is of God, the state is of God. The final end of the existence of both is the manifestation of the will of God in a particular relationship. But it is evident that the family and the state are not institutions which have that object and that object alone, visibly manifested. It is only too easy for us all to think of the family and of the state in an entirely secular way, without the least reference to God. Such an attitude is a profound error, but it is an error which only with difficulty do we avoid ; and besides that (and this is not an instance of error), it is not possible to bring in the thought of the will of God

whenever we speak of the family or of the state. For the family and the state serve legitimate ends which, while not out of accord with that final end which is the manifestation of God's will, yet possess a certain finality in themselves, and need not therefore be continually referred to the true final end of all. But the Church possesses no meaning apart from the will of God as the end of its entire life and activity; it becomes a rather useless association of men and women who claim to be more than scientific investigators, and are much less. It is not possible to defend the Church and evoke enthusiasm for the Church, on the assumption that the Church witnesses to and keeps alive the religious sense which exists in humanity. It might even be argued that in some respects the existence and activity of the Church are not to the advantage of that sense. And if the Church is not grounded in the gracious purposes of God, if it is not itself one of His greatest gifts, an unique organ of His self-revelation, it is most certainly an embarrassment and may be a stumbling-block, demanding the expenditure of time and energy that might be more profitably devoted to other objects. It is only if the Church is what the Church professes to be—a direct expression, under the form of a human association, of the will of God—that it has the right to make such claims as it does upon the mind, the will, and the service of man.

The Church is a world-wide social fact and fellowship, set apart and consecrated to the one end of the delivery of God's mind and God's purposes for the salvation of men. Accordingly it aims at the making of holy persons, because a holy person is the truest conceivable individual *vis-à-vis*

of the holy personal will of God. So the Church exists to make saints, not only in the New Testament sense of consecrated persons—persons set apart to promote the ends of God in the world—but also that such persons may progress towards those ideals of character which we find in the Beatitudes and in the fruits of the Spirit.

But the Church is not only set for the production of holy persons, but also that by the testimony of its faith it may make a response from within humanity to the one divine truth revealed by God. Thereby the idea of catholicity intensifies and deepens itself from being simply the idea of something universal, which is at first a largely spatial conception, into the idea of something which implies a special witness to the truth and authority for the truth. Before the end of the second century the idea of catholicity came to involve the idea of orthodoxy, and for those who hold that divine truth is revealed to man in the Person of Christ, the idea of orthodoxy ought not to convey any notion of narrowness or hardness. Orthodoxy or true thinking, that great idea of such choice and free spirits as Socrates and Plato, is simply the human response and analogue to that divine truth which, as Christians believe, proceeds manwards out of the mind of God. Whatever faults may be set to the account of those who have been the champions of orthodoxy, however true it be that the danger which above all others seems to beset them is that gravest danger of lack of charity, the idea of orthodoxy is necessarily a rational one, if it is once allowed that the truth of God can become the truth of man. Granted the idea of divine truth, it is perfectly reasonable to regard it as important

that man should, with his mind, as well as with his heart and will, make the fullest possible response to that truth. It may be said that the possibility of such a response—in respect of minute detail—has been, and still is, exaggerated; but that the mind of man should make answer to the mind of God, that man should thereby reveal his own fullest possibilities as a rational creature, is a demand reasonable in itself, and one which involves no transmutation of the Gospel into a philosophy.

The conception of the Church as holy and catholic widens, when with the Church is taken the thought of the Communion of Saints. It is not certain what was the exact original meaning of this phrase when it first found a place in the Creed, but a reference to departed believers may have been present from the first, and, in any case, was soon held to be implied. We may be in greater danger of limiting the force of the words to great saints who have passed away, or to the body of the faithful within the veil. We must not forget that in the Church on earth there is a communion or fellowship of saints, and we shall keep a true balance if we allow the words "The Communion of Saints" to bring before us the idea of the Church, the society of God's elect, the mystical body of His Son, in which are included the saints of all ages. It is the whole Church which is the body of Christ, not a church of a particular place or time, not a Church limited to its earthly members; but the whole church on earth and beyond makes up the mystical body of Christ our Lord. It is this fact of the mystical body, witnessed to by the clause in the Creed, which stands for that inner side of the Church's life

which may easily be overlooked, especially in times when so much is said of the Church's failure. Even if all that is said in this connection were true, it would be still more true that the inner side of the Church's life is something much greater than the outward manifestation of that life, that it is an easy and fallacious judgment which condemns the Church on the basis of particular weaknesses manifested at a particular time, and forgets the hidden stores of strength which have carried the Church through worse times and crises. "The failure of the Church" is not a cry first heard in our times; there have been ages when the outlook must have appeared charged with heavier clouds than any which hang over our Church-life to-day. From the very beginning the Church's foes have had plenty of good reasons for setting a short term to the Church's life. But one of the most remarkable facts about the Church's life is its recuperative power. One may doubt whether any earthly kingdom or empire has passed through such trials as have marked that life, and survived, recovering itself again and again from the assaults of enemies without and deeper evils within. Earthly societies often seem to work up to their climax and then to fall from the heights of success, to fall decisively and irretrievably. The reverse is the lesson of the Church's history. There we meet, not with climax and failure, or degeneration never retrieved, but with attainment and failure and recovery after failure. And the hidden resources of the Church, upon which it can draw amid the worst perils, lie away from the vision of the detached or hostile observer; they are known only to those who by faith apprehend the Church as the mystical

body of Christ, as rendering possible a unique fellowship of saints, which death cannot break.

As we pass from the Church to the forgiveness of sins we concentrate our thoughts on the individual, not the society—though the idea of forgiveness has important social implications. The Christian is not only a redeemed person, a member of a holy community, but the actual power of redemption, in which the community is established, is continually manifested to him in his particular forgiveness. The Church is a holy society grounded in that redemptive act whereby the Son of God purchased the Church with His Own blood. In forgiveness the redeemed character of the Church's life is made living and available for the individual; and because of the meaning and value of forgiveness, moral progress is for the Christian something distinctive in kind, implying not simply a passing upwards from the old and lower life, but a settlement with it. Forgiveness itself is not a specifically Christian idea, but uniqueness lies in the connection made between forgiveness and the Person of Christ. All forgiveness points to that great act which made the Church and all Christian living and thinking possible; and forgiveness is that gift whereby in respect of his moral life and its stained and guilty records the individual enters into that which is the general Christian heritage, the fruit of the Lord's atonement. Thus through forgiveness the Christian can link up his life, despite all its weaknesses and sins, with the life of the Church, and make his own contribution to the life of the Church, so that the Church may learn yet more of the graces that are in Christ. The forgiven life is a life

of moral power, because through forgiveness the guilt of past sins is settled with, and the future is no longer encumbered by its unholy burden. Thus forgiveness is a religious grace, and at the same time a moral one, for in the fact of forgiveness are contained both the incentive and the strength for a moral use of the future, the inspiration of sacrifice and effort in order that the fruits of the Lord's Passion, now freely bestowed, and consciously received by one who knows himself unworthy—and yet because of his unworthiness in sore need—of them, may be made visible and honoured, and He Who redeemed all and each at such a price may be served in gratitude and loyalty. Forgiveness would be an immoral conception only if it were isolated from the rest of life and could be represented as no more than a way of escaping from the consequences of such and such sins. But so far from being isolated from life, forgiveness is a key to life's power and happiness, and in the Christian witness to its fact, the Christian experience of its value over the whole range of the moral life, forgiveness is seen as the expression of the divine will for the recovery of God's children from every snare of the devil.

Forgiveness is of the present, but points forward to the future. Our life is lived out to issues which faith already holds secure. When we speak of the Resurrection of the body we bring in the idea of completeness. It is no diminished personality which is the heir to eternity; this is the positive thought which is contained in the confession of resurrection, as distinct from the confession of survival or immortality. Some ideas of survival have been anything but cheerful; the lot of the shades who in

Homer's *Odyssey* are described as existing in the underworld is an entirely gloomy one. The survival of the soul is not necessarily an inspiring or religious idea, though it is capable of true religious expression when it is taken into close unity with the thought of God. But the Christian idea of resurrection is essentially religious, it is one which cannot be separated from the truth of Christ's resurrection, and, when with it is confessed the belief in the life everlasting, it safeguards while it transcends all that we know to be true of our own personality, and of the body as something which is not a mere instrument of will and spirit, but in its consecration to God, and as a temple of the Holy Ghost, has a dignity and value of its own. In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians St. Paul clearly conceives of the future body as the perfection of the present body, the relationship being that of the full growth to the original seed, involving a process not of destruction but of growth and completion. And because this chapter is quite unique in the New Testament, by reason of the length and the deliberate character of its argumentation, and will not cease to exercise a controlling influence upon Christian thought, it is important to note how carefully the Apostle safeguards himself against all such unworthy or naturalistic ideas as would result from any notion of the risen body as a body capable of precisely the same experiences and capacities (and of none but them), as our present bodies. But we may go so far as to say that resurrection implies that those capacities which we now have as a result of the body are capacities which, in a necessarily altered form, will

still exist for us beyond the grave. Such an inference seems to do justice to the religious side of St. Paul's argument, and to bring us to a point where we can perceive the inadequacy of the belief that we shall exist only as disembodied spirits, and obtain some conception of what is and what is not involved in the thought of a spiritual body.

By its conclusion the Creed so transfigures life and death that at times of loss we are able to pass beyond any vague hope of future re-union. Our Christian equipment lies in a faith in the eternal life of ourselves and others which rests upon our faith in God and can be confessed along with it. This is the last stone in the building of Christian faith, and it possesses a strength which no reaching-out into the unexplored future, no hope that all may be for the best, can have. This is the Christian answer to the question which the omnipresent fact of death puts to us; and because that answer is nothing isolated and haphazard, but has its own ordered place in the Christian reply to the challenge of existence, we need not look elsewhere, as though there were some other answer which could secure us in a faith not already secured. There is nothing more to be secured. More detailed information might be supplied, and, now and then, exponents of spiritualism claim that they can supply it. But in so far as psychical research is an investigation of the evidence bearing upon the question of survival it has nothing to say which is not already secured for faith. And whereas every part of Christian belief preserves its vitality by its contact with the central belief in God, there is no such necessarily

close and religious connection in spiritualism. Man and his destiny may usurp the place of God and His will as the centre of that system.

With the confession of belief in the Resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, the Apostles' Creed and the world-view it conveys come to an end. What truth is there in the now familiar argument that that world-view comes to us clothed in outworn forms, and that re-statement is urgent? So far, at any rate, as the Apostles' Creed is concerned that argument and any inferences or demands that follow from it seem to me to rest on no good ground. There are certain differences which divide us from our ancestors in our recitation of the Creed. There is undoubtedly a real difference in the conception of the nature of our physical environment, which separates us from them, due mainly to the change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican astronomy. But beyond that, and in respect of the view taken in the Creed of God and of God's dealings with man, only on one hypothesis can a demand for restatement be made. If the Creed does definitely say what is not true the Creed ought to be rewritten, if rewritten it could be. If I held that the Creed speaks falsely when it asserts that Jesus Christ was born of Mary the Virgin, and that on the third day He rose again from the dead, I should side with the demand for some drastic treatment of the Creed; and whatever arguments might be presented for retaining for solemn affirmation articles which, under the form of false historical statements, preserved true religious values, I do not think that the Christian conscience would be contented to allow so equivocal a situation to abide.

The Creed as a witness to God's revelation and God's gifts remains essentially unchanged from what it was in its more primitive form not far from eighteen centuries ago. And the real justification for this is to be found in the supernatural Gospel, which was the substance of the preaching of the Apostles. It is the recognition of the supernatural Gospel which makes Christianity something different in kind from a religion which was no more than the register of man's richest religious experience and of man's boldest speculations. Where there is no adequate recognition of this there inevitably will take place a development towards a type of Christianity different in kind from that which is given in the New Testament, and needing to be expressed in a form different from that of the Apostles' Creed. The New Testament is the written witness to supernatural good news, preached by those who believed that in Jesus Christ risen from the dead the promises of God were both confirmed and enlarged, and the Apostles' Creed has the value, which a short and lucid statement often possesses, of bringing within a small compass a whole view of life. And so long as we are at one with the Apostles of Christ in believing that to them was committed by God through Him the word of reconciliation for the salvation of the world that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," and their Gospel is ours, so long may we be one with their followers of two or three generations later who drew up in substance that Creed which we recite to-day.

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